

NEW URBANISM, CLASSIC CONSERVATISM ■ McCLELLAN'S BURDEN

JUNE 16, 2008

The American Conservative

Lieberman's Revenge



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RETURNING FIRE

Capt. Dave Livingston unloaded on you because no one “in your shop had ever borne a rifle on one of America’s battlefields” and it takes “gall” for you “to moan about the activities of men committed to a battlefield in the defense of this nation” (June 2).

But no opponent of the Iraq misadventure is criticizing the brave soldiers stationed there. I bemoan only the poor judgment of Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Feith et al. in putting those soldiers in harm’s way for no good reason related to our national interest. Surely Captain Livingston is aware that none of those worthies ever sniffed cordite or heard an angry shot crackle past.

I did as a rifle platoon leader and staff officer in Vietnam. I hold a Combat Infantry Badge and have buddies on that black wall in Washington, D.C. That war, too, was folly. Exploiting our natural solidarity with our troops to avoid having to admit a mistake is an ancient ploy, and the dimwits we keep electing are just smart enough to keep conning the public with it.

Captain Livingston, and other brave soldiers like him, can perform another service to their country by refusing any longer to be duped and by giving their minds and hearts over to a sounder grasp of the nation’s best interests. In that regard, with or without battlefield experience, *The American Conservative* has been shooting straight since its first issue.

FRANK CREEL
Arlington, Va.

JUDGMENT CALL OUT

As a subscriber to your magazine, I’m concerned about your direction and nauseated by your judgment after reading John Lukacs’s review of Patrick Buchanan’s new book (June 2). Notwithstanding my disagreements with Lukacs’s objections, his dozen or so paragraphs lack the intellectual sub-

stance that a serious review requires. Buchanan is entitled to more than this hack job.

The first sin, naturally, is the David Irving comparison. As soon as your editors saw this name in the review, the whole thing should have been garbage-canned. And I nearly dozed off reading Lukacs’s objections. He asks what would have happened if Hitler had been allowed to conquer Poland. Indeed, a profound question. We already know what happened when Britain declared war. Buchanan makes the point that it probably couldn’t get too much worse than what eventually did happen, with the 50 or so million dead and destruction of the cradle of Western man. What says Lukacs to this essential question? Not much. He gives an after-the-fact rationalization about half of Europe dominated by Russia or the whole by Germany. That’s elementary-school analysis.

False, weak, and cheap sums up this review. If you print more garbage like this, that’s how I’ll describe *TAC*.

BRANDON RASK
Clearwater, Fla.

UNIQUE EVIL

I agree with John Lukacs that America had to fight Hitler (call it blowback from meddling in World War I), but his review is troublesome.

First, it is to be expected that there would have been more suicides at the end of the Nazi regime than after the fall of Soviet Communism. Germany had suffered total military defeat and faced occupation by its enraged enemies—who knew what vengeance they might take? Communism fell in Russia because it had become obvious to most Russians that the system didn’t work; the nation remained independent and in Russian hands.

The more significant problem comes in Lukacs’s conclusion. Though I agree that Hitler was evil and we had to fight

him, the fact that a regime is a monstrous dictatorship does not in and of itself automatically lead to a logical conclusion that the U.S. must undertake military action against it. In a world full of nasty tyrants, that is a formula for endless warfare.

The case against the Iraq War and occupation, to use the most obvious example, does not rest on arguing that Saddam Hussein wasn’t such a bad guy after all. The real problem with World War II revisionists such as Buchanan is that, like the neocons, they fail to recognize or acknowledge that Hitler was an exceptional case. The Nazi regime wasn’t just a monstrous dictatorship with an ideology committed to genocide and world domination—it had also seized control of one of the most powerful, efficient industrial economies in the world and one of the most talented and competent militaries in history. This was not the case even with the Soviet Union, which was constrained by an ideological commitment to defying the laws of economics, as well as by a culture arguably less hospitable than that of the Germans to organizational efficiency and technological innovation.

Neo-imperialists like to claim that every Third World dictatorship and guerrilla movement that stands in the way of their pipe dreams is a potential Nazi Germany. We won’t win the political battles against them by pretending that Hitler was no more a threat than the petty tyrants of today but by pointing out the ridiculousness of the comparison.

DAVID HIRAM WELLER
Hollywood, Fla.

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[ELECTION]

HERS TO LOSE

As the final primary returns came in, cable talkers spared no superlatives in marking the Obama Moment. “Breath-taking,” “profound,” no less significant than the moon landing. One host pronounced himself “tingly,” another teared up.

Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton, her campaign racked with debt, continued to stoke her supporters as if she would take her fight to the floor of the Democratic Convention. Terry McAuliffe proclaimed, “We won tonight! We won in South Dakota! We keep winning!” then introduced her as “the next president of the United States!” Two days later, as we go to press, word comes that she finally plans to concede.

How did it come to this? A first-term senator with an unpronounceable name shouldn’t have been able to upend the vaunted Clinton machine. But Hillary’s vote to authorize the war in Iraq proved fatal with liberal activists and inadvertently ceded the “change” theme to her opponent. While Obama focused on winning as many delegates as possible in states Democrats rarely visit, Clinton’s campaign dithered. Reports dribbled out that highly paid staffers spent their afternoons watching soap operas. The aura of inevitability only temporarily veiled Hillary’s hubris: senior advisers readily confessed that the Clinton operation had no plan for campaigning after Super Tuesday. And instead of being an asset to his wife’s campaign, Bill Clinton indulged his worst sensibilities: indiscipline and eagerness to play the victim.

Despite pastor-eruptions, Obama continued to win endorsements and superdelegates. His lead became insurmountable. But Hillary continued to run well from behind. She found a base of voters within the party—the white working class—who awarded her huge



victories in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia even after the media declared her run futile. The final weeks exposed Obama’s weakness in winning over the heart of the FDR coalition and foreshadow general election difficulties for the Democratic nominee.

Hillary’s defeat has the punditocracy declaring the triumph of “a new kind of politics.” But the Clinton era is not over. She remains the most recognizable senator in the country and will either negotiate a place on Obama’s ticket or receive his blessing to shape a nationalized healthcare system.

Soon the Fourth Estate will be portraying her loss as a necessary humbling before her ultimate triumph. The end of one Clinton campaign is only the beginning of another.

[VEEP]

WEAVING WEBB

The chorus calling Obama to pick Virginia Sen. Jim Webb as his running mate rose to crescendo late last month, with *Atlantic* blogger Reihan Salam declaring, “The question is no longer whether Barack Obama should select Jim Webb as his nominee. It’s whether he can justify *not* doing so.” *The Nation* con-

curred, “Obama’s strangest option is also his strongest,” Bob Moser wrote before cataloging Webb’s dissents from lefty orthodoxy—“Reagan-era Defense official,” “proud Vietnam veteran,” “adores firearms,” “criticized affirmative action for blacks,” and much more. He concluded, all that aside, that Webb is still “one of the Democrats’ strongest voices from the left on the two great issues of the day: Iraq and economic fairness.”

His heterodoxies, as well as Webb’s stand against the war, are the things we find most attractive—and the qualities that might bring millions of voters to an Obama/Webb ticket. But James Fallows, another *Atlantic* blogger and a man who has known Webb for over 30 years, offers a word of caution: “I can’t imagine a job he would enjoy less than the vice presidency.” Webb—like Daniel Moynihan, the “intellectual politician” he models himself upon—values his independence. He’s not the type to smile at state funerals and parrot the president’s line.

Dick Cheney leaves the vice presidency an office transformed, of course. Webb has electoral appeal and, if elected, he might be the closest thing to a paleo-conservative—whatever his departures

from right-wing orthodoxy—to come within a heartbeat of the Oval Office in modern times. But he might find the vice president's shoes, even enlarged by Cheney, a tight fit. Fallows is right: "He's a great person for the Senate; the Senate is a great place for him." And the #2 slot? We aren't sure, but we're intrigued.

[MEMORIAM]

WILLIAM E. ODOM (1932-2008)

While Congress fawned over Gen. David Petraeus during his most recent drop-in, another general, William Odom, offered a far more grim assessment of the democracy project. "Our ostrich strategy of keeping our heads buried in the sands of Iraq has done nothing but advance our enemies' interest," the 34-year veteran told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "I implore you to reject these fallacious excuses for prolonging the commitment of U.S. forces."

His candor should have surprised no one. While other high-profile critics reserved their doubts for private salons, Odom publicly opposed military action in Iraq well before the war began. Clear-eyed and precise, he called the invasion "the greatest strategic disaster in U.S. history." He was equally unsparing of its neoconservative enablers: "It's pretty hard to imagine us going into Iraq without the strong lobbying efforts from AIPAC and the neocons, who think they know what's good for Israel more than Israel knows."

Many have been tarred for telling lesser truths, but Odom wasn't easily dismissed. A soldier and scholar both, the decorated Army officer served as military assistant to National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski in the Carter administration, then directed the National Security Agency under Ronald Reagan. He also learned Russian, earned a Columbia Ph.D., taught at Yale and West Point, and produced seven books.

He didn't, however, survive to see the country he loved recover realist bearings. Bill Odom died May 30, at age 75, of an apparent heart attack. Active to the end, he published an op-ed in the *Washington Post* three days before his passing. The opening line read, "Current U.S. policy toward the regime in Tehran will almost certainly result in an Iran with nuclear weapons."

[WAR]

100-YEAR PLAN

Backers of the Iraq War don't make effusive claims about democracy anymore. But there are some "democratic" qualities emerging in the new Iraq. Late last month, tens of thousands of Iraqis took to the streets to demonstrate against the security agreement being negotiated between Washington and Baghdad. It's designed to set ground rules for the occupation once the UN mandate expires at the end of this year. For a people born into a political culture of secrecy and terror, the mobilization of thousands of protestors in several cities is no small achievement.

According to press accounts of the talks, the U.S. is seeking freedom of movement for its troops, the right to dominate Iraqi airspace, the right to launch military operations against those it defines as terrorists without Iraqi permission, and immunity from Iraqi law for its troops, contractors, and corporations.

These are classic imperialist demands, and it is hard to imagine that an Iraqi government that acceded to them would not be seen as weak and traitorous both by its opponents and by future generations.

We don't know how the negotiations will shake out over the summer, but the demonstrations affirmed what the polls of Iraqis consistently record: if American forces stay in Iraq, it will be against the wishes of most Iraqis. ■

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[loserman no more]

Lieberman's Revenge

If the Connecticut hawk can't convert the Democrats, he'll take them down.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN was once at home in the Democratic Party. He won his Connecticut state senate seat in 1970 as a Democrat, rising to majority leader. Then he won the attorney generalship in 1982, where he stayed until his U.S. Senate victory. His friends still argue that he was robbed of the vice presidency in 2000.

Even after losing the 2006 Senate Democratic primary to the antiwar Ned Lamont, Lieberman promised to remain faithful to his party. He announced that he would caucus with the Democrats and stand with them on procedural votes if elected, though he owed his seat to the GOP: 70 percent of Connecticut Republicans cast their ballots for Lieberman, compared to only 33 percent of Democrats. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid allowed him to keep his seniority and his committee positions. And Lieberman told colleagues that he wished to see a Democrat elected president in 2008.

That doesn't mean Lieberman hasn't been trying to renovate his old home. His plan: "to keep alive the principled, internationalist, and muscular foreign policy tradition that once lay at the heart of the Democratic Party." This translated into reflexive approval for the 1991 Gulf War "because our president has asked us to vote to support him" and early advocacy of intervention in Kosovo because "fighting for the KLA is fighting

for human rights and American values." From 1995-2001, he chaired the Democratic Leadership Council, a hub for liberal hawks, and in 2002, he joined the Project for a New American Century's Committee for the Liberation of Iraq.

Lieberman argues that his is not only a principled position but a politically advantageous one. He told a group at Johns Hopkins University last year that by the time he reached office, liberal internationalism "had been out of fashion in Democratic circles for 20 years. But then, Democrats had also been out of power for most of those 20 years—something that struck me and many others as more than coincidental. Simply put, the American people didn't trust Democrats to keep them safe, and the McGovernite legacy was a big reason why."

With the nomination of Barack Obama, Lieberman sees the McGovernite faction ascendant. So he has reneged on his promise and endorsed Republican John McCain, renewing his ideological assault on his old party. "Dean Acheson once warned, 'no people in history have ever survived, who thought they could protect their freedom by making themselves inoffensive to their enemies,'" he recently wrote. "This is a lesson that today's Democratic Party leaders need to relearn."

But Joe Lieberman has changed his teaching tactics. For this self-styled "Independent Democrat," being loyal to his former party now means inflicting

defeat upon it. If he becomes a major figure in the McCain administration along the way, so much the better.

Writing in the *New York Post*, Lieberman explained why he crossed party lines: "[T]he dangers we face as a nation are too profound, and the challenges we face too real, for us to let partisan politics decide who we will support." He campaigns regularly with the Arizona senator and co-authors editorials with him. "I am spending all the time I can outside the Senate to help him become our next president," he recently told the press.

Acting as a gunslinger for McCain means firing direct shots at the presumptive Democratic nominee: "My Senate colleague Barack Obama ... has not been willing to stand up to his party's left-wing on a single significant issue in this campaign, nor for that matter has he worked with Republicans in the Senate during his three and a half years there to forge the tough, bipartisan compromises that produce results for the American people." By contrast, Lieberman claims that McCain "has shown the political courage throughout his career to do what he thinks is right—regardless of its popularity in his party or outside it ... to reach across party lines to get things done for our country."

His primary line of attack against Obama has been the Illinois senator's vision of diplomacy. He criticizes Obama's willingness to meet with the president of

Iran, whom Lieberman calls “the terrorist leader of a terrorist regime.” Meanwhile, Lieberman says Obama and the Democrats “have simultaneously pledged to abandon the democratically-elected government in Baghdad.” He hurls similar charges at Obama for agreeing to meet with Kim Jong Il while he “turns his back on South Korea with his opposition to a trade agreement with Seoul.”

Lieberman doesn't just criticize Obama's policies, he regularly strikes at his former party's ideology. In May, he delivered the keynote speech at a fundraising dinner for the influential journal *Commentary* in which he lambasted Democrats for giving in to defeatism: “At critical moments and on critical issues of foreign policy and homeland security, they have resurrected the profoundly wrong and persistently unsuccessful McGovern-Carter worldview...” He longed for “the Democratic Party that I grew up in—a party that was unhesitatingly and proudly pro-American, a party that was unafraid to make moral judgments about the world beyond our borders, a party that grasped the link between the survival of freedom at home and the survival of freedom abroad.” Invoking Harry Truman and John F. Kennedy, Lieberman urged his former comrades to be once again, “a party that understood that either the American people stood united with free nations and freedom fighters around the world against the forces of totalitarianism, or we would fall divided.”

But Lieberman's boyhood Democratic Party is not one his former friends and colleagues recognize. “Lieberman badly misrepresents history,” says George Jepsen. “Let him not forget Jack Kennedy learned the hard way from the Bay of Pigs to be skeptical of military-only solutions.” Jepsen recently served as chairman of the Connecticut Democratic Party and later chaired Ned Lamont's

campaign. In contrast to Lieberman's deference to Gen. David Petraeus, Jepsen recalls that Kennedy rejected the advice of the officer class during the Cuban missile crisis, averting war.

Lieberman's crusade raises an obvious question. “I am sometimes asked why... I do not simply become a Republican,” he said recently. “I continue to be a Democrat because I believe there is a critical need for two great American political parties with strong national security wings. We need a Democratic Party whose national security strategy isn't subject to editorial review by Moveon.org and Daily Kos.” And, of course, Lieberman remains a liberal at heart. He favors universal health care and has been a reliable supporter of abortion rights throughout his career. He supports gun-control legislation and fiercely opposed the nomination of Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court. He has joined McCain in supporting campaign-finance reform, cap-and-trade schemes for carbon reduction, and “comprehensive immigration reform.” None of these are conservative positions, but since Lieberman has rallied to the defense of President Bush's policies in Iraq, the conservative movement has rallied to him.

Eight years ago, the Right mocked Lieberman's half of the 2000 Democratic ticket as “Loserman.” But instead of viewing his 2006 campaign with detachment, leading conservatives rushed to his aid. Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, and *National Review* ignored the Republican candidate, Alan Schlesinger, and endorsed Loserman. NRO editorialized that a win by the anti-war Lamont would mean “the Daily Kos crowd will have succeeded in remaking the Democratic party while reducing the party's national influence.” They conceded, “Life is full of trade-offs.” Of course, the editorial proved precisely wrong. In the midterms, “the Daily Kos

crowd” connected with a public tired of war, and Democrats saw their national influence rise.

But movement conservatives are not dissuaded. Ever supportive of Bush's war policies, they continue to abandon their own intellectual forebears even as they sign on to Lieberman's campaign to revive Truman and Kennedy. Larry Kudlow, who in 2000 derided Lieberman as “a typical Northeastern Democratic liberal,” has done a perfect 180, recently describing Lieberman's remarks to *Commentary*, as “a tour-de-force speech that impressed me once again with the brilliance of Joe Lieberman. Frankly, he would make a good president. Undoubtedly, he will have a major cabinet post if John McCain wins.”

But however disloyal these political maneuverings might seem to Democrats, they can't claim that Lieberman is motivated by personal animus. Bob Hanfling, an old hand in Connecticut Democratic politics going back to the '70s, says, “Whether you agree with him or not, it is unthinkable that he would take positions on such serious matters out of spite.” It would be “inconsistent with his integrity. He deep down believes that it is good for the U.S. and good for Israel, good for the Middle East.” Lieberman's own words demonstrate that his political commitments are rooted in ideology. He gave his audience at *Commentary* a pitch-perfect neoconservative view of patriotism, rejecting the conservative attachment to mere hearth and home and liberal skepticism about America's capabilities and intentions. His love of country is “rooted not in arbitrary attachment to our country's land or its borders, but in a recognition that the values that were present at the creation of America and animate it still—the values of freedom and justice and opportunity—are not just our own national values; they are universal and eternal values, which are right and true

Intelligence analysts who have briefed Sen. John McCain on international issues generally report that he is not very knowledgeable about most parts of the world, despite of his years of experience in government and his campaign's insistence that one of his principal strengths is foreign-policy expertise. When speaking with an area specialist or expert, McCain is primarily interested in stating his own perceptions and is not generally regarded as an attentive listener. Analysts do not like briefing him because he becomes angry and sometimes personally offensive when someone contradicts his view. One analyst stated that McCain's alleged expertise on international issues is essentially bogus. He speaks no foreign language, and his international experience derives from brief postings at military bases, junkets while serving as Navy liaison to the Senate, and the misfortune of his rather more extensive stay in the Hanoi Hilton.

As a congressman, McCain served on committees dealing with Department of the Interior issues, Indian affairs, and the problems of aging—all areas of particular interest to his Arizona constituents. As a senator, he has served on the three committees dealing with the armed services, Indian affairs, and commerce. He is regarded as an expert on the military, both because of his background and due to a genuine interest. But McCain's only foray into foreign affairs as a senator has been his chairmanship of the International Republican Institute, a controversial quasi-public arm of the Republican Party engaged in democracy promotion overseas. McCain's position with IRI requires him to make an occasional speech on policy, but he has no hands-on role and is not much interested in particular issues. One of the private contributors to IRI is the notorious private mercenary firm Blackwater USA, which donated \$15,000 to the group's coffers in 2005 and 2006 and in return received a contract for \$18 million to protect IRI workers overseas.

McCain's foreign travel in recent years has been in the security and diplomatic cocoon that has become normal for someone with a senator's status. His comments during and after visits to Iraq have been lampooned in the media for being completely disconnected from the situation on the ground. Like George W. Bush, McCain has not been inclined to vacation outside the United States, and he appears to have little curiosity about the world and its peoples. According to the analysts who have interacted with McCain, his recent misstatements about various Muslim groups and other foreign-policy issues are not slips. They reflect a real lack of interest in other countries that makes it impossible for him to empathize with their problems, leading to a monochromatic view of the world and the facile assumption that it is always better to solve issues dealing with foreigners by dropping bombs.

McCain, whose foreign-policy advisers are exclusively neocons, receives regular briefings from the distinguished scholars at the American Enterprise Institute, which are presumably more to his taste than the less colorful information provided by the \$42 billion per year intelligence community.

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance.

not only for us in our own time, but for all people in every time."

While Lieberman may not be acting out of pique, that doesn't mean his politics are untainted by ambition. One former Connecticut colleague attests that Lieberman has long felt touched by destiny: "He always had this vision he would be the first Jewish president, and things were just going to work out." Until Florida, they did. McCain's improbable nomination gives Lieberman another chance. Jepsen states bluntly, "He has to rise with McCain. ... McCain likes him and no one is more indebted to him ... it's his ticket to the next step up."

Lieberman rebuffs speculation about his position in a McCain administration, but he does drop hints. In his speech at the Paul H. Nitze School at Johns Hopkins University, Lieberman identified himself with Nitze, a hawkish Democrat who served in the Truman and Kennedy administrations. To combat anti-interventionists in both parties, Nitze helped to reconstitute the Committee on the Present Danger, which lobbied against détente and the SALT II agreement. While remaining a Democrat, Nitze later served as Reagan's chief negotiator in arms reduction treaties and as a special adviser to the president and his secretary of state. Lieberman seems eager to follow in Nitze's footsteps.

In reality, Lieberman's wish to see two American political parties with "strong national security wings" is a desire to see dissent from anti-interventionism forever discredited. McCain's primary victory has temporarily secured hawks' supremacy in the GOP. And while Lieberman may never again influence his party in a direct manner, a McCain victory in November, aided by Lieberman, could be used to frighten Democrats into accepting the neoconservative view of history: that doves will always lose, that America is fundamentally an activist nation. It's up to Democrats to prove him wrong. ■

Keeping Up With Jones

The North Carolina congressman shows that antiwar conservatives can win—for now.

By W. James Antle III

LATE LAST YEAR, Walter Jones looked like he might lose his seat in Congress. The seven-term Republican's emergence as a fierce critic of the Iraq War had angered some erstwhile supporters back home. He had a serious primary opponent in Onslow County Commissioner Joe McLaughlin. Influential Beltway conservatives were beginning to set their sights on Jones as well.

A \$500-a-head McLaughlin for Congress fundraiser at Arent Fox's downtown law offices last November wasn't attended by an overflow crowd. The best known and most hawkish journalist on hand, David Frum, was there as a cosponsor rather than a reporter. But amidst the hors d'oeuvres and friendly banter, there was a sense of optimism that Jones could be beaten. The most hopeful may have been McLaughlin himself. "I've hammered in signs for Walter Jones," he told me. "But he's gone too far. People in the district are ready for a change."

Some people, perhaps, but not a majority of Republican primary voters. On May 6, Jones dispatched McLaughlin by nearly 20 points. He carried all but three out of 17 counties, including Onslow County, home to both McLaughlin and the Second Marine Division at Camp Lejeune. Incumbency and a familiar family name—between the congressman and his father, someone named Walter Jones has served in North Carolina's House delegation for all but two years since 1966—surely helped. "Being an incumbent is always a plus unless he's been walking around kicking people in the shins," explains Bob

Pruett, Republican chairman for the Third Congressional District, who was neutral in the primary.

Yet Jones didn't always seem like a shoo-in. The Third District houses three military bases and a large number of veterans. President Bush won there in 2004 with 68 percent of the vote. It is, to put it mildly, not the most hospitable environment for opposing the war, and initially Jones didn't: he voted to authorize the use of force against Iraq. In 2003, taking a cue from the Carolina-based Cubbie's restaurant chain, Jones sought to have French fries rechristened "freedom fries" on Congressional menus to protest France's stand against the invasion. French toast also fell casualty.

But Jones soon began to have second thoughts. After attending the funeral of Marine Sgt. Michael Bitz, who left behind a 2-year-old and newborn twins when he was killed in action, the congressman began writing letters to the families of each service member who died in Iraq. Doubts about prewar intelligence gnawed at him, and he continued studying the matter. By June 2005, Jones was persuaded that the war had been launched in error and was co-sponsoring a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq.

This conversion cost Jones the top Republican position on the Armed Services Committee's Readiness subcommittee, though ranking member Duncan Hunter did grant his request to sit on the Oversight subcommittee. But the political reaction back home was more troubling. McLaughlin, a photogenic and gregarious former Army officer, announced

his primary challenge in May 2007. Ronald Cherubini, chairman of the Onslow County GOP, withdrew his support from Jones. "Disloyalty is something you just can't tolerate," he told *The Politico*. "That's the way military people look at it."

"Most of the polls taken at activist events showed Congressman Jones to be in serious trouble," says Pruett. McLaughlin won straw polls at Republican dinners in five different counties and released his own district-wide polling showing the race neck and neck. The freedom friers at Cubbie's turned against Jones too. Owner Neal Rowland took down the congressman's pictures and offered to host McLaughlin's election night party. "Things are moving as we want [in Iraq]," he told the *Raleigh News and Observer*. "We're bringing democracy to them."

The McLaughlin campaign sought to link Jones to left-wing groups like MoveOn.org, Code Pink, and the American Civil Liberties Union. "They tried to paint him as a liberal," says Jonathan Morris, assistant professor of political science at East Carolina University. McLaughlin quickly capitalized on votes and statements that would allow him to expand this critique beyond the war. Jones received low grades on the Club for Growth's anti-pork report card and supported overriding President Bush's veto of the Water Resources Protection Act. He also voted for Democratic energy and farm bills that Americans for Tax Reform deemed a violation of the Taxpayer Protection Pledge, including a tax increase on some U.S. subsidiaries of for-

eign corporations that was intended to pay for higher spending on food stamps.

"He wants to impeach the vice president," Grover Norquist quipped to *The Hill*. "ATR doesn't have a position on that. But tax increases is going too far." Jones's vote to advance articles of impeachment against Dick Cheney and references to "Kool-Aid drinkers" who were duped into uncritical support of the war by conservative talk radio threatened to anger the Republican base even more than tax increases.

In February, a similar coalition of hawks and economic conservatives defeated nine-term Congressman Wayne Gilchrest of Maryland by ten percentage points in the Republican primary. The Club for Growth spent more than \$340,000 on anti-Gilchrest ads. Later, Pajamas Media website obtained poll numbers that purportedly showed Ron Paul, who had endorsed Jones, down 11 points in his own GOP Congressional primary against a pro-war opponent. Things did not look good for antiwar Republicans.

MOST OF THE 17 GOP HOUSE MEMBERS WHO VOTED FOR A NONBINDING RESOLUTION AGAINST THE SURGE WILL RETURN TO CONGRESS.

Then a funny thing happened: much of the anticipated opposition melted away. The polling data Pajamas Media cited turned out to be bogus, and Paul won his primary in a landslide. The Jones campaign released a poll showing the incumbent leading McLaughlin 54 percent to 16 percent. With a few exceptions, the expected national support for McLaughlin failed to materialize. "Unfortunately, they didn't do anything about it," a North Carolina Republican activist says of D.C.-based conservatives' interest in the race. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich came to the district to raise \$70,000 for Jones.

"Jones had a warchest. He had a lot of money and was very prepared for a primary challenge," says Morris. "He advertised very heavily on TV and radio. With McLaughlin, I didn't see many ads, mailers, signs, anything. They could partly have to do with my location in a college town, but we get the same airwaves as the rest of east Carolina." Pruett sums up McLaughlin's campaign similarly: "The financing just wasn't there."

Despite the campaign rhetoric about Jones's "new liberal friends," he had a much more conservative record than Gilchrest. The Maryland congressman was pro-choice, pro-gun control, and in favor of the "comprehensive" approach to immigration reform—all positions to the left of his district. Jones, a signer of the Contract With America, strongly opposed the Bush administration's amnesty for illegal immigrants. He is staunchly pro-life and was endorsed by the National Rifle Association. "I've stood up for the right of military chaplains to pray in Jesus' name," Jones says. "I've stood up for the border control agents,

Ramos and Compean." He voted against the Medicare prescription drug benefit and No Child Left Behind, both far more costly than any earmark. And while national conservative groups might have disliked Jones's vote against trade deals like the Central American Free Trade Agreement, his position is popular in the district. "Even on trade, he's at least arguably conservative," says Morris.

It would be a mistake to read too much into Jones's primary victory or that of fellow antiwar Republican B.J. Lawson in the neighboring Fourth District. Republicans who oppose the Iraq War remain a distinct minority. Jones's

stalwart support for defense spending and veteran's issues probably did more to help him win over military voters than his talk of exit strategies. "Any congressman who has been in office as long as I have has a great staff and does well with constituent services," Jones says.

Moreover, the weakened national party must focus scarce resources on protecting seats rather than punishing dissent. Ron Paul Republicans are winning primaries. Most of the 17 GOP House members who voted for a non-binding resolution against the surge will return to Congress. Jones, like Paul, is heavily favored for re-election in the fall.

This isn't to say there hasn't been any rethinking of the war. "I think there are a lot of people, the kind who don't go to party functions, who understand my position," Jones maintains, "Republican, Democrat, and unaffiliated." He points out that the last group of voters is the fastest-growing in North Carolina right now. For Republicans like Jones, the GOP's national woes create opportunities to change the battered party's brand. "People are rallying around the idea of looking out for America first," he says. "On Iraq, on trade, on gas prices, on illegal immigration."

There is, of course, also a cautionary tale for would-be mavericks: had Congressional Republicans fared better in fundraising and recruiting candidates for open seats, more resources would have been available to aid a challenge like McLaughlin's. Either way, Jones is safe for now. "We're committed as a party to getting Jones re-elected," Pruett vows.

The North Carolina congressman has his own priorities for the next two years: "I'm going to try to continue to serve God and His people"—while keeping the lights on in the small but determined antiwar Republican caucus. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of The American Spectator.

Moscow Hangover

Soviet Communism no longer enslaves Russia, but the West has yet to exorcise Lenin's ghost.

By Peter Hitchens

WHAT A PITY it is that there will be no new Cold War. How useful it would be for the cause of freedom if we could once again hang the Kremlin and the Gulag round the radical Left's neck. But we cannot. The Kremlin is now swept clean of dogma, the Gulag is gone, and Russia is just another sordid despotism.

And so, freed from embarrassing associations with Lenin, Stalin, five-year plans, purges, famines, and the KGB, the world's radical reformers are far stronger, and far harder to resist, than they used to be. As long as the words "progressive," "Communist," and "Socialist" brought to mind images of Soviet oppression, Soviet shortages, and Soviet intolerance, millions of people were inoculated against them.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn used to complain that the Iron Curtain kept everything out of Russia except what he called the "liquid manure" of Western trash culture, which somehow seeped beneath the barriers. In a strange and subtle way, it also prevented the spread of revolution in the advanced world.

It is an interesting lesson in real power to see how much mightier left-wing ideas and movements have become since they lost the support of all those Russian tanks. Far from helping the revolutionary cause, the columns of T-72s showed to the dimmest observer that socialism is not a gentle, kindly thing but an arrogant, ironclad, goose-stepping bully, which answers doubts with bayonets as soon as it has the

power to do so. There was never any need to ask how many divisions the Communist Party had because it was so anxious to show them to us.

I watched the last proper Soviet tank parade as it thundered across Red Square on Nov. 7, 1990. There were red flags, rigid salutes, slanted faces, jackboots, and lush, totalitarian music. Just behind me and to my right, a shifty and diffident Politburo huddled on top of Lenin's tomb in the harsh wind. The thing they were uncertainly celebrating was called the Glorious October Socialist Revolution, that colossal failure that would have killed idealism off for good if we ever actually learned anything from history.

They were not enjoying themselves much because they knew just how bad everything was and suspected their days were almost over. I was enjoying it immensely because, in those days, I harbored the vain idea that the world might learn something useful from the unmitigated disaster of the Soviet Utopia. For thousands of miles in every direction, undeniable and no longer denied, lay the rusting, leaking, sagging evidence that this revolution had failed and that international socialism was a discredited, bankrupt idea.

A couple of months later, I saw some of the same tanks snarling down a midnight highway in Vilnius, capital of Lithuania, which was then battling to regain independence from Moscow. I was in a group of journalists following

them, until they swung their barrels toward our taxi in a way that seemed to lack a sense of humor. Earlier that day, Soviet soldiers had opened fire on civilians, so we thought it wise to drop back. We caught up with them later and also with the corpses they had caused, officially classified as "traffic accidents." They were part of a little known and failed attempt by Mikhail Gorbachev to seize control of the city while the world was distracted by the first phase of the recapture of Kuwait.

I saw the tanks for the last time in August 1991, when a squadron of them trundled up my Moscow street in the early morning sunshine, part of a fumbled KGB putsch against Gorbachev. The drunken collapse of this coup ended the Soviet Communist Party forever. All over Moscow, the trashcans were full of half-burned Communist Party membership cards. This was not a temporary setback but the death of an ideology. Soviet Communism had made a fool of itself and had gone. After that, of course, there could be no more Red Square parades, no more anniversaries of Glorious October, though they had one more excursion, in 1993, shelling the Russian parliament on behalf of Boris Yeltsin.

Oddly, the Communist Party, or rather its bewildered true believers, survived. No normal person continued to belong, but these rather touching, rather serious old people—far from contemptible, often incorruptible and serious, fre-

quently decorated veterans of war—could not abandon the faith they had been brought up with. For one brief moment, when millions had their savings wiped out and were thrown out of their jobs, they seemed about to recover. But it passed, and now they linger as a sort of echo, useful to the regime as a harmless, impotent opposition.

maintains that Khodorkovsky's trial was fair and denies any connection with the two deaths.

There is a temptation to conclude that we have returned to the days of the Evil Empire. Have we? And if so, whose fault is it? My own view, formed in Moscow during the final months of Gorbachev, is that the U.S. and its allies missed a great

When Britain scuttled from her African colonies nearly half a century ago, she, too, was obsessed with the appearance of democracy and left behind toy parliaments, complete with opposition benches and maces. These—lacking the centuries of experience, civil war, and weary, cunning compromise that lie beneath the original—soon became laughable parodies or were simply extinguished. Interestingly, the courts Britain bequeathed lasted far longer. The idea of an independent judiciary, and of a law that is above power, appeals to something universal in the human soul. But that was never even attempted in Russia, though it would have been possible immediately after the fall of Communism.

Partly thanks to us, partly thanks to the horrible moral consequences of totalitarian socialism and the near extermination of God by systematic commissars, the new Russia is a lawless snake pit. It is dominated and populated by men stripped of morality by more than 70 years of cynical Leninism. But though the new rulers are the products of Marxism, they lack its driving purpose—or any real purpose except the gaining and keeping of wealth and power.

So Moscow, once the sacred heart of world Communism, has become a sort of Babylon, the most exhilarating, tasteless, and expensive city in the world, where you can procure anything for money and the nasty negative charisma of gangsters and spivs is on constant display. I cannot think of any other advanced capital in which you can see, side by side, all the manifestations of modern civilization and the symptoms of anarchy—ostentatious bodyguards, fenced-off compounds.

As a former resident from 18 years ago, I view the transformed city with seriously mixed feelings. It is thrilling to see the restored beauty of the churches and monasteries, sparkling with gold

WE THROGGED MOSCOW WITH **EXPERTS ON THE FREE MARKET** AND THE OUTWARD FORMS OF DEMOCRACY BUT NONE ON **LIBERTY OR THE RULE OF LAW.**

Then it was announced that the tanks were coming back. As part of the inauguration of President Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian army would once again be allowed to drive its armor through Red Square. Had the clock really been turned back 18 years? There had been—and still is—much chatter of a return to the old hostilities.

Russia has certainly discovered that it can use its energy power to threaten its neighbors and buy Western politicians. It snarls, with good reason, over the West's strange anti-Serb policy in Kosovo. It intervenes blatantly in the politics of Ukraine. It menaces former Soviet republics, now nervously independent, on the Baltic coast and in the Caucasus.

And Vladimir Putin, now prime minister, has effectively suffocated political and press freedom, suppressing serious dissent in parliament, banning unwelcome independent candidates from running for office, and creating a creepy mass youth movement and a creepier personality cult.

The mysterious murder of independent journalist Anna Politkovskaya, the still stranger murder of former KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko, and the rigged trial and imprisonment of the businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky are seen by most people as signs of the ferocious intolerance of the new regime, which officially

opportunity in Russia. We continued to be absurdly suspicious, and needlessly triumphalist, as Gorbachev dismantled his country. We forced Russia back to the humiliating borders imposed on her by Kaiser Wilhelm II at the Carthaginian Peace of Brest-Litovsk in 1917. We brought the NATO alliance up to Russia's front door. We meddled in the Caucasus and Central Asia. But we had neither the military power nor the long-term commitment to these places to sustain these actions. Russia, sadly for the people of Georgia, Ukraine, and the Baltic Republics, will still be there waiting, long after Washington has lost interest in their fate.

And while we engaged in this maddening hubris, we throgged Moscow with experts on the free market and the outward forms of democracy but none on liberty or the rule of law. Many Russians to this day sneer at the very idea of democracy, associating it with the Yeltsin years of suppurating corruption combined with bankruptcy, when their savings were wiped out and their wages and pensions went unpaid, while oligarchs prospered. Instead of saying "*demokratiya*," the normal Russian word for "democracy," they say, with a twist of the mouth, "*dermokratiya*," which translates politely as "the rule of excrement." It is hard to blame them.

leaf and carefully tended, when all too recently they were semi-ruins, deliberately desecrated as reformatories for teenage louts or tatty warehouses for unwanted junk. It is a delight to stroll in the 19th-century lanes just south of the river, painted and cherished for the first time in 90 years, revealing a gracious and light-hearted Russian streetscape that was previously only visible in old prints and faded photographs.

The cleanliness of the air, compared with the brownish substance that we used to have to breathe, is another joy. Windows are washed, sidewalks are free of sudden chasms and open manholes, rats no longer sport around the entrances to the railway stations. The ambulances are no longer encrusted with dried blood, and the police, though still menacing, manage to be a little less slovenly. Even the great gloomy Stalinist skyscrapers, scrubbed and floodlit by night, seem to have turned into truthful historical monuments of the era that conceived them.

On a fresh May morning, surrounded by all these pleasures, it is hard to remember that a squalid and repressive state is in charge, that corruption is commonplace, and that one chilly pygmy—in spirit as well as in actual size—has just been succeeded by another as president. In fact President Medvedev is even smaller than the 5'5" Vladimir Putin. An unkind rumor says that during his inauguration he never donned his chain of office for fear that it would dangle absurdly around his knees.

It was even a pleasure to watch the tanks growling through the one narrow entrance to Red Square that they can now use. In 1990, they had two ways in, but thanks to the restoration of one of Russia's holiest places, the northern one is closed. In 1929, the shrine of the Iberian Virgin had been torn down, its holy and revered icon flung into a storehouse. Now it is back, and the military

must go another way. There is a special pleasure in this for those who know about the long, violent state persecution of faith begun by Lenin and continuing well into the 1980s. It is over.

Along with the tanks came great bulbous strategic rockets, unpleasant things to see at any time, and marching young men dressed nostalgically in the uniforms of Stalin's Red Army, a conscious attempt to resurrect national feeling among the war generation. For the previous week, Russian TV had been showing classic war films of the Stalin era, many of them much loved, for the same purpose.

I asked several Russians what they thought of this strange parade. One granddaughter of a Red Army general said that her mother, an old-fashioned patriot, was impressed, and I have no doubt that many older, less informed people were. But others were not. An old friend whose father was a submarine captain in Admiral Gorchkov's blue-water navy and who spent his youth close to Soviet military equipment, laughed, "I hope you enjoyed our display of strategic scrap metal."

THE TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN RESPONSE TO DESPAIR IS TO GET DRUNK, AND ALCOHOLISM IS NOW WORSE EVEN THAN IN THE DAYS OF LEONID BREZHNEV.

He was not far off. The tanks and rockets on display were, at best, prototypes of machines that the Russian arms industry cannot produce in any numbers. The old system has broken down and cannot be replaced. The soldiers are part of a shabby army, as corrupt as the state it serves, that is not remotely comparable, in fighting skills or technology, to a serious Western force.

Attempts to create a professional force have so far stalled. The draft is breaking down as young men bribe their way out of service or sign up for dubious academic

courses, many of them created solely to qualify students for exemption.

The display was intended to promote a picture of a modern, united Russia. But the country is still backward and disorganized, kept going only by the windfall from the high price of oil and gas. The road system is still rudimentary. Agriculture is in ruins—60 to 70 percent of food is imported—and the country manufactures nothing but weapons, vodka, and tourist knick-knacks.

There is the standard Third World division: a few monstrously rich people—130 billionaires—and a gigantic, growing class of ultra-poor, with a quarter of the population living on \$2 a day. The traditional Russian response to despair is to get drunk, and alcoholism is now worse even than in the days of Leonid Brezhnev, who used a previous oil boom to ensure that his haggard people at least had enough sausage, medals, and vodka to keep them placid.

But there is one huge, important difference. Private life is now free. You may say and think what you like and nobody will put you in a camp or claim that you are insane and

pump you full of mind-altering drugs. Only if you offer a direct, open challenge to authority will you be troubled—and then generally by the tax police or the fire authorities who would rather put you out of business than into jail.

Most people, understandably, are willing to accept this squalid but comfortable bargain. The fanciful idea that prosperity would automatically engender freedom, that if you give a man a Mercedes he will want a civil society, is as untrue in Russia as it is in China.

As I walked through this strange, rejuvenated city, the heart of an authoritarian tyranny that threatens itself but no longer the heart of a totalitarian ideology that threatens us, I remembered the many things about it that had most disturbed me in Soviet days but have now faded.

I recalled the little mosquito-haunted park with its statue of Pavlik Morozov, the Communist martyr. Morozov, a mythical creature who may not even have existed, denounced his father to the secret police for some anti-party crime. The horrible creature's grandfather then, not unreasonably, murdered this unnatural brat. Morozov was turned into a national hero for putting his loyalty to party above loyalty to family.

A Russian friend once shamefacedly confessed to me that she had been taken on ritual pilgrimages to honor Morozov's statue. His school, in the Urals, became an actual shrine. This respectable lady, who without any embarrassment would regularly lay flowers on a nearby monument to the KGB chief Yuri Andropov, felt that the worship of the Morozov cult was the most disturbing and shocking facet of her upbringing.

I remembered the horrible little nurseries, baby farms where Moscow mothers would park their children while they went off to spend their days at compulsory jobs. Life was arranged so that families needed two Soviet salaries to pay for the necessities of life, so hardly any mothers could afford to stay at home. I remembered the way that almost every adult I met was divorced. I remembered the way that abortion was the favored method of birth control.

I recalled the contempt and loathing for religion that had been successfully drummed into almost every professional person, combined with a gross ignorance of what the great faiths actually said. Above all, I concluded that the two things revolutionaries hated most

were the stable married family and religious faith.

And I remembered coming back to the West, full of optimism, in 1992. And then I remembered seeing, year by year, in my own country and the U.S., new versions of all these subtle horrors: the "children's rights" movement that encourages denunciation and sets children against their parents, the shoving of infants into daycare from an incredibly early age, the need for two salaries to pay the basic bills, the epidemic of divorce, the pandemic of abortion, the growing spiteful rage against faith. I saw all around me the construction of a system of thought that dismissed conservative, individualist points of view as intolerable and pathological. I saw public servants, academics, and broadcasters having their careers ruined—and in Britain being questioned by the police—

for expressing incorrect opinions. Private life, in the modern West, is now becoming significantly less free than it is in post-ideological Moscow.

I have begun to suspect that the bacillus of revolution, once confined inside the borders of the USSR, did not die with Communism. On the contrary, it adapted itself and escaped in a new form. Now it rages busily in a world where, instead of storming the Winter Palace, the post office, and the railroad station, the enemies of freedom infiltrate the TV studio, the college campus, and the school. There is a new Cold War after all, but it is being fought inside our borders, without tanks or missiles. ■

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Children of '68

De Gaulle restored order, but the radicals won.

By Neil Clark

IN ONE CORNER, a 77-year-old general from an old aristocratic family, a war hero, and the ruler of his country for the past ten years. In the other, a red-headed young anarchist, preaching the language of liberation and revolution.

Charles de Gaulle was portrayed by the 1968 rioters in Paris as a right-wing reactionary—an old fuddy-duddy hopelessly out of touch with the spirit of the times. Daniel "Dany le Rouge" Cohn-Bendit, unofficial leader of the student rioters, was billed as the radical "progressive." But 40 years on, it's clear that the real hero of 1968—and the man whom history has totally vindicated—was de Gaulle.

The French president was no right-wing dictator à la General Franco. Distrustful of politicians—he once famously declared "politics are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians"—de Gaulle saw referenda as the best way for a leader to divine the wishes of his people. Always distrustful of the power of money and market fundamentalism, he introduced a mixed economy, a welfare state, and presided over the biggest rise in living standards for ordinary people in French history. "He was a man who did not care for those who owned wealth; he despised the bourgeois and hated capitalism" was the verdict of de Gaulle's biographer Jean Lacouture.

Neither did De Gaulle care much for wealth itself. Despite occupying the highest office in the country for a decade, he died in relative poverty. Instead of accepting the pension he was entitled to as a retired president and general, he only took the pension of a colonel. The contrast between de Gaulle and the money-obsessed career politicians of today could not be greater.

De Gaulle's foreign policy stressed national sovereignty and pursuing the French—not the American or anyone else's—national interest. Having done more than any other Frenchman alive to help liberate his country from Nazi occupation, he was not going to let it be dominated by any other power after the war. De Gaulle also felt strongly that French forces should always be under French control. For this reason he took France out of the military command of NATO in 1966. An instinctive “live and let live” anti-imperialist, he pulled French forces out of Algeria and was the strongest Western critic of the war in Vietnam and Israel's policies toward the Palestinians.

Cohn-Bendit, of the Fédération Anarchiste de Nanterre, was the antithesis of everything de Gaulle stood for. De Gaulle, the archetypal proud Frenchman, had been born into a deeply patriotic family. Cohn-Bendit, born in France to German parents in April 1945, was officially stateless at birth. De Gaulle loved France; Cohn Bendit hated almost everything about it in 1968.

While de Gaulle, the devoted husband and family man, preached social conservatism, Cohn-Bendit advocated extreme libertinism. He first came to national prominence when he interrupted a speech by a minister who was inaugurating a swimming pool at the University of Nanterre to demand free access to the girls' dormitory. The disturbances of 1968 were kicked off when Cohn-Bendit, together with seven other stu-

dents, occupied offices and lecture halls of the University of Nanterre and declared the “22nd March movement.” The student protests quickly spread to the Sorbonne, and soon France was in crisis. Although economic grievances were added to the students' demands in an attempt to bring industrial workers into the dispute, the main motivation behind the protests was social, not economic. “It was a revolt, not a revolution—we wanted to change this old fashioned society,” recalls Cohn-Bendit.

The old Left was unimpressed. French Communist Party leader George Marchais famously denounced Cohn-Bendit and his fellow student protestors as “sons of the upper bourgeoisie who will quickly forget their revolutionary flame in order to manage daddy's firm and exploit workers there.” The working class remained skeptical of the demonstrations. They had good reason to be. Under de Gaulle's *dirigiste* economic policies, the French economy recorded growth rates unrivalled since the 19th century. In 1964, for the first time in 200 years, France's GDP overtook that of the United Kingdom. The protestors called for increased industrial democracy, yet this was also a policy long favored by de Gaulle, who announced in a national address on May 24 a referendum that would give the government authority to “amend the economy in favor of the less fortunate” and also to reform the universities.

De Gaulle's speech, while exasperating many conservatives, exposed the anti-democratic credentials of the opposition—those who claimed to favor the “rule of the people” weren't too keen on the people being directly consulted. De Gaulle's next address to the nation, after a further six days of disturbances, was less conciliatory. “France is indeed threatened with dictatorship,” he declared and called early elections. “The Republic shall not abdicate. The people

will recover their balance. Progress, independence and peace will prevail.”

The address marked the turning point in the crisis. That evening a huge crowd of de Gaulle supporters began to gather in the Place de Concorde. Up to 700,000 people took part on the march down the Champs-Élysées chanting pro-de Gaulle slogans. In the general elections that followed at the end of June, the Gaullists recorded a resounding victory.

Although Gaullism had prevailed, de Gaulle himself had been shaken by the events of spring 1968. After narrowly losing a referendum the following April, he resigned from office and died the next year.

Meanwhile, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the man who had done so much to stir up discontent, moved on to new pastures. Back in Germany, he became involved in radical Green politics and ran a kindergarten in Frankfurt. His stated aim: to “radically transform” German mentalities. As in 1968, it started with sex. In his 1976 book, *Le Grand Bazar*, he wrote of children opening his trouser zipper and tickling him and how he “caressed” the children. When these comments led to accusations of pedophilia, Cohn-Bendit claimed that the book had to be understood in the context of the sexual revolution of the time.

Today, Cohn-Bendit is co-president of the European Greens-European Free Alliance grouping in the European

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Parliament. He advocates the legalization of soft drugs and freer immigration. A strong supporter of Western military intervention in the Balkans in the 1990s, Red Dany's enthusiasm for overriding national sovereignty is something he shares with his fellow *soixante-huitard* Bernard Kouchner, the current French foreign minister.

De Gaulle believed the people's verdict, delivered through a referendum, to be the last word. Red Dany's views on referendum results are rather different: he infamously called for countries who twice vote "No" to the neoliberal EU constitution to be expelled from the European Union.

The anti-de Gaulle protestors in 1968 purported to be anti-capitalist, but their attacks on traditional values, the family, the church, and the nation state only helped the cause of global capitalism. Forty years ago, the international moneymen were restrained, not just by currency and exchange controls but by the prevailing social attitudes that still held greed to be one of the seven deadly sins. By helping to crack what he called "the yoke of conservatism" and loosening the ties of family and community that bind us together as human beings, Cohn-Bendit paved the way for the change in attitudes toward money-making.

"The 'bourgeois triumphalism' of the Thatcher (and Blair) era, the greed-is-good ethos which even the governor of the Bank of England now condemns, and our materialistic individualism,

might just have had their roots 40 years back," writes the conservative commentator Geoffrey Wheatcroft. Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Gordon Gekko are two sides of the same self-centered, individualistic coin. "No one has dared tell them that we live in a world of market forces," says Cohn-Bendit as he attacks those on the Left in France who are less enamored of 21st-century capitalism than he is.

Although he has talked of "the extreme religion" of "Thatcherism and even Blairism," Cohn-Bendit's solution to the rule of corporatism is not a return to the *dirigiste* policies of "Les Trente Glorieuses" but that classic New Left cop-out "the social market." In other words, allow capital to rule the roost, but make government pay for the mop-up operation.

In 1968, the fault lines became clear: on the one side were the sovereignists—a coalition of conservatives like De Gaulle and traditional leftists—on the other, the globalists, socially and economically liberal, bent on destroying the nation state, national culture, identity, and any links with the past. Although De Gaulle's party won a resounding election victory in June 1968, it is Cohn-Bendit's pernicious ideology that dominates today.

Tony Blair may have attacked the excesses of 1960s social liberalism under which "a society of different lifestyles spawned a group of young people who were brought up without any sense of responsibility to others,"

but in many ways the intellectual guru of Britain's New Labour—and the 21st-century New Left in general—is Cohn-Bendit.

An obsessive hatred of conservatism—and conservatives—is a hallmark of both New Labour and Cohn-Bendit. "The one striking new paths in politics will always be accused of something: conservative thinking is always taking revenge," he complained in an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* earlier this year. In a 1999 speech to his party's conference, Tony Blair ferociously attacked "the forces of conservatism," a group that included everyone from fox hunters, hereditary peers, and the medical profession to left-wing supporters of nationalization and "those who yearn for yesteryear," who stood in the way of the brave new globalist future.

New Labour severed Old Labour's strong links with the indigenous and staunchly conservative working class. It rejected the old Left's distrust of military adventurism and respect for the sovereignty of nations and instead embraced a militant interventionism, beginning with the attack on Yugoslavia in 1999 and culminating in the debacle in Iraq. "Old leftist friends of mine from the 1960s are now on Labour's frontbench and staunchly defend the overthrow of Saddam Hussein," boasted Christopher Hitchens.

Cohn-Bendit's militant ideology has infected not only the Left, but the Right, too. John McCain's advocacy of a more liberal immigration policy and his championing of a League of Democracies, with the right to intervene in the affairs of sovereign states the world over, owes more to Daniel Cohn-Bendit than it does to Russell Kirk.

Forty years ago, Red Dany lost a battle. But the sad truth is, he won the war. ■

Neil Clark is a journalist specializing in Middle Eastern and Balkan affairs.

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The Incredible Shrinking President

After losing both houses of Congress in the 1994 election, Bill Clinton expostulated: The president of the United States is not irrelevant.

On learning his trusted aide from Texas Scott McClellan has denounced as an “unnecessary war” the same Iraq War McClellan defended from the White House podium, George W. Bush must feel as Clinton did.

The synchronized savagery of the attacks on McClellan as turncoat suggests he drew blood. For what he has done is offer confirmation to the president’s war critics, from within the White House inner circle, that Bush’s motive in going to war was not a clear and present danger of attack by Iraq with weapons of mass destruction but to advance a Bush crusade to impose democracy on the Middle East.

Neoconservative ideology, not U.S. national interests, McClellan says, motivated Bush to launch one of the longest and most divisive wars in U.S. history.

When loyalists defect and seek to profit from that defection, it is usually a sign of a failing presidency. Events suggest that history is passing Bush by.

Despite the administration’s designation of Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organizations, and of Syria and Iran as state sponsors of terror with whom we do not negotiate, America’s clients are ignoring America.

Israel has ignored Bush’s demand that it stop building and expanding settlements on a West Bank that is to be the heartland of a Palestinian state. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has been secretly negotiating with Syria for the return of the Golan Heights in exchange for peace.

When America refused to play honest broker between Jerusalem and

Damascus, Turkey, at Israel’s request, stepped into the role.

The pro-American Lebanese government of Prime Minister Siniora has negotiated a truce and power-sharing arrangement with Hezbollah, giving that militant Shi’ite movement and party veto power in the Beirut government. Egypt is negotiating with Hamas for a truce in the Israeli-Gaza war and to effect the exchange of a captured Israeli soldier held by Hamas for Hamas fighters held in Israel.

The Iranian Revolutionary Guard, designated a terrorist organization by the Senate, helped to arrange the ceasefire between government forces and the Mahdi Army in Basra and Sadr City. While the United States has used the roughest of language to denounce Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president has been received as an honored guest by the Iraqi government we support and by the Ayatollah Sistani, who has yet to meet a high-ranking American.

When Bush went to the Middle East to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Israel as the Zionist he has become, he was criticized by a Palestinian leader who survives on U.S. aid. When he went to Riyadh to plead for an increase in the flow of oil, he got a token concession from the Saudi king.

In Pakistan, the new government has been negotiating a truce with the radicalized frontier provinces, which would leave the Taliban with a privileged sanctuary from which to prepare their annual offensives to overthrow the government in Kabul and expel the Americans, as their fathers expelled the Russians.

As Russia and China move closer together to oppose U.S. missile defenses and the U.S. presence, military and economic, in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Latin America seems to be going its own leftward way. The halcyon days of the Alliance for Progress are long gone.

The world seems to be waiting for Bush to depart and for the next American president. For the foreign policy differences between John McCain and Barack Obama are as real and stark as they have been since the Reagan-Carter election of 1980 or the Nixon-McGovern election of 1972.

It is hard to give the Bush foreign policy passing grades. We pushed NATO eastward and alienated Russia. We have 140,000 Army and Marine Corps troops tied down in Iraq in a war now in its sixth year, from which our NATO allies have all extricated themselves. We have another war going in Afghanistan, where the situation is as grave as it has been since we went in.

The Bush democracy crusade was put on the shelf after producing election triumphs for Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. And the Bush Doctrine of preventive war, after Iraq, appears to be headed there as well.

America remains the first economic and military power on earth. But after seven years of Bush, we no longer inspire the awe or hopes we once did. We are no longer the world hegemonic power of the neocons’ depiction. And the reason is that Bush embraced their utopian ideology of democratic empire and listened to their siren’s call to be the Churchill of his age.

Of Bush, it may be said he was a far better politician than his father, but as a statesman and world leader, he could not carry the old man’s loafers. ■

Love Your Neighborhood

As climbing energy prices make sprawl increasingly unaffordable, Americans are rethinking the way we live. But current urban planning allows few choices.

By William S. Lind

I often think it's comical
How Nature always does contrive
That ev'ry boy and ev'ry gal
That's born into the world alive
is either a little Liberal
Or else a little Conservative

—*Iolanthe*

JUST AS IT IS WITH PEOPLE, so it is with issues. For reasons (or lack thereof) I find puzzling, New Urbanism is perceived by Left and Right as a “liberal issue.” Conservatives are supposed to love sprawl, but many of us actually like the idea of living in traditional neighborhoods, villages, and towns—cities perhaps a little less. We have nothing against walking and want nice places to do it. As conservatives, we believe traditions should be upheld, in architecture as elsewhere. And conservatism has always favored local variety over broad-scale uniformity.

Edmund Burke told us more than 200 years ago that traditional societies are organic wholes. If you disintegrate a society's physical setting, as sprawl has done, you tend to disintegrate its culture as well.

In traditional communities we interact with the people who live around us, while in conventional suburbia we usually do not. The typical suburbanite gets up in the morning, grabs a quick cup of coffee, and heads out the door. But the door leads to the garage, not outside. He gets in his car, turns on the air conditioning and the radio, and backs out. He

might wave to a neighbor in his car. He knows where he lives but doesn't know his name.

At work, he may be stuck in an office park or strip center, unable to walk down a sidewalk for lunch with his fellows. Coming home in the evening, if he stops at a store or restaurant, it is probably several miles from where he lives. The other people there were drawn from a wide area. It is a rare occurrence to see anyone he knows.

Once home, he probably stays in the house. If he exercises, he drives to a gym. Most evenings he spends in front of the TV or computer. He may go outside on weekends to cut the grass or barbecue, but most of what he does requires a trip in the car. He couldn't walk or ride a bike if he wanted to; the streets have no sidewalks, and he would quickly hit a major road with fast traffic.

Contrast that to life in a traditional town, village, or neighborhood. Grocery stores, shops, restaurants, coffeehouses, churches, the library, and the post office are all within walking distance. So is the elementary school and maybe the high school as well. Streets have sidewalks, and a grid pattern means people can always find a back way with less traffic if they want to walk or bicycle. Kids play outside of structured, supervised activities. To get to work, people may drive, but they may also walk to the bus or Light Rail stop.

These conditions draw residents out of their houses and cars. They spend

more time walking. And because the area is small and relatively self-contained, people get to know their neighbors—the first step toward the formation of community.

Most conservatives agree that two of the most important things we want to conserve are our traditional culture and morals. Conserving those means passing them on to the next generation, despite the surrounding pop culture, which does its utmost to undermine them. We can do so much more effectively where values are supported by a community than when we have to try to teach them in isolation.

The family is the most important institution for ensuring the survival of traditional culture and morals. Churches and schools come next and do their jobs best when the people who attend know one another in other contexts. That happens much more easily when students walk to a local school and families walk to worship than when they have to drive miles away. And when both adults and children live in a genuine community, the peer pressure to do the right things instead of the wrong can be intense.

This, then, is the basic equation: traditional towns, villages, and neighborhoods, which the New Urbanism seeks to offer as alternatives to sprawling suburbs, greatly facilitate the growth of community. And conservatives value community because of the vital role it plays in transmitting and upholding the culture we have and the morals we hold.

But these aren't the only reasons conservatives should find the New Urbanism worthy of their support.

New Urbanism recovers many of the practices that created the original North American settlements, the urban pattern common until the 1930s. Its designers tend to work within well-tested precedents. That doesn't mean banning large house lots, multi-car garages, and parking lots, but putting them in appropriate places and providing other choices. No one is intrinsically wrong when it comes to his urban preferences. He may only be wrong in where he wants to exercise them. Good New Urbanist plans endeavor to accommodate most of society's preferences, from churches to tattoo parlors.

Moreover, the New Urbanism has been primarily market-driven. Projects are developed by the private sector for profit, and residents can decide whether or not to buy in. The problem is that most of the market is not free. New Urbanism is illegal under most current regulatory regimes, where codes mandate sprawl. Building a New Urbanist project typically requires securing a large number of variances, which is expensive in both time and money. But given the choice, a substantial number of people will choose New Urbanist communities.

Some New Urbanists favor toll roads as alternatives to publicly subsidized highways; especially where parkways are concerned, commuters should shoulder the true cost of their travel and lifestyle choices. Many also believe parking should be metered rather than subsidized. Most New Urbanists favor congestion charges for use of urban streets where good public transit is available. Subsidies may be required for building and operating transit, but only at the same level as building and maintaining highways. The object is a level playingfield, which a free market requires.

New Urbanism is also small-business friendly, since it facilitates working at home. Thanks to the Internet, virtually every home in the 21st century will be a live-work unit. New Urbanists believe that providing affordable business quarters is no less important than providing affordable housing. There are in fact two American dreams, not just the "little house in the woods" but also "being your own boss." New Urbanism provides opportunities for both.

Further, the New Urbanist housing practice encourages ancillary dwellings for rent. The income from the rent helps the homeowner pay the mortgage, and the rented room or outbuilding provides housing that students, newly married couples, or the elderly can afford.

Finally, the New Urbanism fosters community by making walking easy and pleasant, by providing places such as coffeehouses and diners where people can meet, and by creating attractive public spaces. It promotes social cohesion and local democracy that can look beyond individual interests. While housing is carefully designed to provide privacy in the backyard and indoors, it is also designed to be sociable to the pedestrian realm in front of the house.

* * *

Like *Fu Manchu*, New Urbanism has many faces—27 to be exact. These are the principles laid out in the *Charter*, the formal document by which the movement defines itself. Most are compatible with a traditionalist creed, but not all are above conservative criticism.

The first group of nine deals with "The Region: Metropolis, City, and Town." "The metropolitan region is a fundamental economic unit of the contemporary world," the *Charter* asserts. "Governmental cooperation, public policy, physical planning, and economic strategies must reflect this new reality."

Conservatives recognize that regions are now what count economically. They generally rise or fall in prosperity as a whole. And because we believe in economic growth, we want regions to function well as economic units. But that does not mean we want regional government. One of conservatism's long-standing principles is subsidiarity, the belief that problems should be dealt with at the lowest possible level, beginning with the most basic social unit, the family, and progressing reluctantly up through the neighborhood, municipal government, county, state, and finally the federal level. Adding a regional layer of regulation will only increase costs, burden landowners and builders, and create one-size-fits-none solutions.

Instead of regional government we want regional co-operation, working bottom-up, not top-down. Government should have the power to convene a discussion between municipalities in a region, but not to overrule them. Some matters need to be dealt with at the regional level, but most are best handled locally. By allowing each community to develop in its own way to the greatest practicable extent, we reflect conservative subsidiarity and support the New Urbanist goal of keeping each community true to its individual character.

Continuing on, the *Charter* states, "The metropolis has a necessary and fragile relationship to its agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes. The relationship is environmental, economic, and cultural. Farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house."

Conservatives can strongly agree with this. We recognize that agriculture is a culture—and a beneficial one. Farms are good places for children to grow up, and city dwellers need easy access to natural landscapes and farm-fresh produce, not just wilted vegetables picked weeks ago in California. The

Charter notes: "One third of all American farms ... are located in areas with at least 50,000 residents. ... According to *American Farmland* magazine, farms in metro areas produce 70 percent of our fruits, 69 percent of our vegetables, and 52 percent of our milk."

The *Charter* goes on: "Development patterns should not blur or eradicate the edges of the metropolis. ... Metropolitan regions should develop strategies to encourage such infill development over peripheral expansion."

America's cities have long been following a pattern of development that leads to decline. The city expands ever outward, as a decaying semi-abandoned core expands toward the edge. Decay chases development. At some point, it catches up.

Conservatives don't want America's cities to turn into empty holes. We want them to be the uplifting, productive places most of them once were. We need to refocus development inward, not outward, but we would offer one caveat: sprawl needs to remain an option for those who want it.

"The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents and boundaries," the *Charter* continues. This argument is conservative in itself. Conservatives respect the past and desire historical continuity. The *Charter's* discussion of this principle states:

In Colonial New England, towns were laid out collectively by the community, and the boundaries extended only as far as the town meeting bell could be heard. The building of homes and businesses once was focused around the 'heart' of the community—the town green was its cultural, economic, and spiritual center. From the local hilltop, people could see their community laid out and could understand it.

Community grows best where people can physically see their place as an entity and find it lovely. Pride in a place they can "put their arms around" becomes a shared sentiment, one of the bonds that create and reinforce a sense of community.

When you look at those colonial New England towns, you see that the most imposing building on the green is usually the church. To those New Englanders, it was the most important building: it had charge over their immortal souls. As Russell Kirk observed, culture comes from the cult. Similarly, community comes best and most strongly from the church. Some New Urbanists neglect to provide suitably prominent sites, and enough of them, for churches in their plans. If enough are allocated, places of worship will be constructed over time, as congregations obtain the resources.

In its next point, the *Charter* departs a bit from conservative principle, stating, "Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes. Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the region to match job opportunities and to avoid concentrations of poverty."

Yes and no, but mostly no. Conservatives know that people do best when they live by standard middle-class values. Distributed, affordable housing serves that goal by dispersing the poor among the middle class, where peer pressure reinforces positive values. But that plus is outweighed by two large minuses. The first is that "diversity" works against community. Communities form most easily among people who are similar. The more diverse a population, the less likely it is to form a community. The genuine benefits of community outweigh any imagined benefit of diversity. Second, forcing the urban poor into middle-class communities risks shatter-

ing those communities since it usually pushes the middle class out into the countryside. The flight from people who are uncivil—or worse—is perhaps the single most powerful factor behind the decline of our cities. New Urbanism that refuses to acknowledge social cohesion renders itself a fairy tale.

There are two types of diversity conservatives find acceptable. Both occur naturally, not in response to ideologically driven mandates. The first is a diversity of communities, such as Chinatowns or Little Italies, within a larger city. The distinctiveness of such places strengthens rather than weakens the bonds of community. The second naturally occurring form of diversity is variety within the middle class. A place may have residents who are lower-middle, middle-middle, and upper-middle class who still cohere sufficiently to create a sense of community. Small towns offer a classic example of this sort of variety—a word conservatives much prefer to "diversity"—within a range that is solidly middle class.

In general, the conservative reply to this principle is the same as our reply to the New Urbanist critique of sprawl suburbs: people should be free to choose. We predict the large majority will choose community over diversity.

Rounding out its discussion of the region, the *Charter* states, "Revenues and resources can be shared more cooperatively among the municipalities and centers within regions to avoid destructive competition for tax base and to promote rational coordination of transportation, recreating, public services, housing, and community institutions."

This calls for turning tax money over to a regional government, forcing middle- and upper-class communities to cross-subsidize the poor inner city. As conservatives, we reject this outright. A community is stripped of much of its meaning when its tax revenues are

taken from it and given to someone else. People will respond to this sort of robbery by moving out, further into the countryside, which is what New Urbanism seeks to avoid.

* * *

The *Charter* groups its next nine principles under the heading “Neighborhood, District and Corridor”—the three basic building blocks of cities. Describing the neighborhood, it states:

Within the 10-minute walking circle, a neighborhood includes a mix of different house and apartment types. Streets make legible connections that are easy to walk as well as drive, and there are neighborhood shops, schools, and civic buildings, all within walking distance.

With regard to the second component, the districts, New Urbanism agrees with present zoning that most industries should be separated from residential districts, but argues for mixed-use zoning, the integration of residences into business districts. Far from being innovative, this is merely a return to the way cities and towns were configured up until World War II.

The question of zoning is troublesome for conservatives. Some oppose all zoning—at least until a pig farm moves in next door. But as cultural conservatives, we accept zoning as necessary to maintaining continuity. We don’t like to see the character of places changed radically in ways that obliterate history and traditions.

In *Sidewalks in the Kingdom: New Urbanism and the Christian Faith*, author Eric O. Jacobsen discusses zoning in a common-sense way: “It makes sense to have a law preventing a pulp mill or a slaughterhouse from moving into a residential neighborhood. But is it as clear that a coffee shop or a

mom-and-pop grocery is detrimental to neighborhood life?”

Corridors, the third building block, connect districts. Unfortunately, in America that has come to mean highways lined with strip malls. New Urbanism offers alternatives including parkways, rail-transit lines, and the clustering of stores and businesses at one-mile nodes along a corridor.

This section includes another point of agreement between conservatives and New Urbanists: public housing should be designed as neighborhoods and towns, not bleak blocks of Soviet-style apartments. Conservatives, like New Urbanists, do not want the benefits of traditional design to be available only to the wealthy. Well-designed public housing, especially when coupled with programs that help residents become owners, can help the poor acquire the middle-class values and habits they must have if they are to be integrated into middle-class society.

The *Charter*’s 16th principle states, “Concentrations of civic, institutional, and commercial activity should be embedded in neighborhoods and districts, not isolated in remote, single-use complexes. Schools should be sized and located to enable children to walk or bicycle to them.”

New Urbanism’s call to return to neighborhood schools resonates powerfully with conservatives. Local schools, locally controlled, can offer better educations than vast, centralized facilities fed by busing and run by educators.

Moreover, as Philip Langdon points out in *A Better Place to Live*,

If we follow this course, many other benefits are likely to follow. Communities would be less fragmented. Parents would be less coerced to spend their leisure time as chauffeurs for their offspring. Children would have more oppor-

tunities to become self-reliant and to gain experiences that prepare them for responsible adulthood. The elderly would find fewer obstacles to staying in their longtime neighborhoods.

The discussion of this principle points to another issue dear to conservatives—public order:

... large concentrations of housing in areas far removed from workplaces and shopping have led to empty neighborhoods during the day that are easy prey for thieves and vandals without the “eyes on the street” that would contribute to safety and security.

Mixed-use zoning and better provision for pedestrians means more people at home and on the sidewalks, which improves public safety.

The *Charter* goes on: “The economic health and harmonious evolution of neighborhoods, districts, and corridors can be improved through graphic urban design codes that serve as predictable guides for change.” There is a danger here of inventing a new form of cookie-cutter monotony—Levittowns with front porches. The *Charter* recognizes the problem: “Codes must achieve a delicate balance of assuring compatibility ... without inhibiting creativity (buildings should read as distinct and have individual character)... Codes should encourage variety while ensuring the harmony that gives a community character.” Variety with harmony describes conservatism’s goal in many things, not just architecture.

Some may object that New Urbanist codes constrain builders’ and buyers’ freedom. The answer, again, is choice. New Urbanist buildings may be constructed in a variety of styles, not just traditional. And people should be able to build or buy whatever they want—just

not always where they want. That is a matter of limiting behavior that trespasses on other people's rights, namely the right to harmony in their neighborhoods.

Of great importance to conservatives, the *Charter* here acknowledges the right to build and buy sprawl. Under "Implementing Strategies," it says: "Adopt a set of parallel ordinances. Keep the current ordinances but also offer an alternate track that will produce a mixed-use neighborhood." This free-market approach is central to conservatives' acceptance of New Urbanism.

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The *Charter's* last nine principles involve "Block, Street, and Building." Countering a popular misconception, it argues, "At this scale, we need to accommodate automobiles as well as pedestrians. New Urbanism does not naïvely call for the elimination of the car. Rather, it challenges us to create environments that support walking, biking, transit, and the car."

The first principle in this section states, "A primary task of all urban architecture and landscape design is the physical definition of streets and public spaces as places of shared use."

The exteriors of buildings create either welcoming or alienating public spaces. Think of a public park: if the buildings around it are cold, forbidding Modernist architecture, the park itself is not a pleasant place. As the *Charter's* commentary makes clear, this principle is inherently conservative, because it is a call to return to tradition:

The liberation of architecture and landscape from their traditional civic duties as the walls, portals, and passages of the public realm is a recent phenomenon that tends to displace what has stood as shared wisdom for millennia... New

Urbanists regard this condition of formlessness as neither beneficial nor irreversible.

Sometimes New Urbanism is just a matter of not forgetting old knowledge.

The *Charter* continues, "Individual architectural projects should be seamlessly linked to their surroundings. This issue transcends style." The principle and commentary are so conservative they could have been written by Russell Kirk:

The architecture of our time is dominated by obsessively self-referential, isolated projects. Such projects aggrandize the individual interests of their clients. They highlight the formal language and signature of their authors. They endeavor to express in stylistic terms the mood of the cultural instant when they were designed and built ...

We are left with a cultural and physical landscape of unprecedented confusion, monotony, and fragility ...

In contrast to an Architecture of Time, New Urbanist architecture is an Architecture of Place ... New Urbanist architecture strives to evolve by exercising critical design choices across time.

The villain here is the Modernist architect who designs monuments to ego—buildings wholly inappropriate to their settings. Such architects should be condemned to an eternity looking at their own buildings. As the *Charter's* commentary says,

A genuine architectural culture can only exist within the accumulated experience afforded by historical continuity. For architecture and urbanism to prosper as disciplines,

they need the wisdom and guidance of enduring values, traditions, methods, and ideas.

The next principle nods to another conservative value: "The revitalization of urban places depends on safety and security. The design of streets and buildings should reinforce safe environments, but not at the expense of accessibility and openness."

Without public order and safety from crime, no society is viable. Conservatives have long taken the lead in fighting crime, and we know the most effective way to fight it: identify the habitual criminals, arrest them, and put them in jail for a long time. But New Urbanism adds an important element most conservatives have not considered: design.

There are two ways to design for safety. The first is to make everyone live behind high walls. The courtyard house found worldwide provides this kind of security. While courtyard houses can be lovely behind their walls, they create one of the worst imaginable street-scapes. And conservatives instinctively reject this sort of hide-under-the-bed security. To us, if that is how we have to live, the criminals have won.

New Urbanism offers an alternative. It uses design to create spaces that are both open and safe—safe because they are open but also clearly someone's responsibility. New Urbanism ensures there are no places that cannot be read as someone's territory. The street is "our street."

Community policing, where police on foot, bicycles, or horseback patrol a regular beat, getting to know the people and what is normal in the neighborhood, is essential for urban safety. Nothing undermines effective city policing more than putting officers in squad cars. By the time they receive a call, it is too late; the city's peace has already been broken. Safe cities prevent crimes, not

just respond to them. New Urbanism needs to adopt community policing as a principle.

Next, "Civic buildings and public gathering places require important sites to reinforce community identity and the culture of democracy. They deserve distinctive form, because their role is different from that of other buildings and places that constitute the fabric of the city."

Conservatives have long lamented the decline of civic architecture from the magnificent, neoclassical buildings of our grandfathers' time to structures that resemble industrial warehouses. We happily cheer the *Charter* commentary on the matter:

It is surely one of the minor mysteries of modern times that civic buildings in America have become cheap to the point of squalor when they were once quite magnificent as a matter of course. Our post offices, public schools and colleges, fire stations, town halls, and all the rest are no longer honored with an architecture of fine materials, tall spaces, and grandeur of form. The new civic buildings are useful enough, but they are incapable of providing identity or pride for their communities.

The *Charter* denounces the utilitarianism behind much bland, sad modern civic architecture; conservatives have opposed utilitarianism since the days of Jeremy Bentham. Civic order and civic architecture join their cries for restoration.

"All buildings should provide their inhabitants with a clear sense of location, time and weather," the *Charter* continues. "Natural methods of heating and cooling can be more resource-efficient than mechanical systems." Few conservatives enjoy working in cubicles resembling veal-fattening pens, cut

off from natural light and air. We want sunlight and fresh air coming through open windows as much as anyone, if only to waft away the smoke from the cigars and pipes we insist we be free to smoke.

New Urbanists offer an environmentalist argument for natural light and air as ways to reduce energy consumption. This may make some conservatives unnecessarily leery. We are not environmentalists because we recognize in it a new ideology, and we know where ideology inherently leads: to tyranny. We are, however, conservationists. If we can be as comfortable with windows open as with air conditioning on, we have no desire to run up our electric bills. We remember how our grandmothers kept their houses cool on warm summer days by opening the house at night and closing it in the heat of the afternoon.

Just as traditional morals and manners made for a more comfortable society, so traditional designs for homes, schools, and offices made for more comfortable buildings. As conservatives, we look forward to reviving both.

The *Charter* closes: "Preservation and renewal of historic buildings, districts, and landscapes affirm the continuity and evolution of urban societies." Here we find another New Urbanist principle that is inherently conservative. Respect for the achievements of our forefathers and maintenance of continuity with the past are conservative themes. The *Charter* commentary puts it well:

For ... urban evolution to occur successfully, there must be an implied 'contract' about the nature of city building in which the contributions of previous generations are understood and creatively reinterpreted, even where change is substantial ... New Urbanism reinforces the importance of being

aware of and honoring the historic fabric of urban places.

Here, New Urbanism, with G.K. Chesterton, recognizes that conservatism is a democracy that includes the dead. As Charles, Prince of Wales noted, "I believe that when a man loses contact with the past he loses his soul. Likewise, if we deny the architectural past—and the lessons to be learned from our ancestors—our buildings lose their souls." It is hard to imagine a more conservative sentiment.

* * *

Conservatives can accept most of the principles of New Urbanism, as they provide physical settings conducive to attaining conservative goals, especially community. We reject imposed "diversity," but if some people want it, they are welcome to it. That should be a choice in an open market. Likewise, builders and buyers should be free to choose sprawl. As conservatives, we simply want codes to support choice: a typical sprawl code alongside a New Urbanist code.

New Urbanists shouldn't have to wade through a bureaucratic thicket, seeking variance after variance from government regulations in order to build what many people want. They find no difficulty in selling their products—only in offering people the option our grandparents had: life in a genuine community, more, in a beautiful community, a place they enjoy residing in and in which they take civic pride. What worked then will work now, and in the future as well. ■

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Rogue Notions

Democracy is still a revolutionary idea—that's the problem.

By Paul Gottfried

IT WOULD BE WRONG to imagine that while Republicans are driven by their desire to transform those who are not like us politically and culturally, their Democratic opposition holds radically different premises. Both national parties, and even two publications with such supposedly opposing worldviews as *National Review* and *The New Republic*, engage in the same Wilsonian rhetoric, and both sides of the political center view foreign countries as places for trying out our progressive ideals. Both use the language of human rights, and both believe that if the U.S. is to be true to itself, it must export its values as a foreign-policy priority.

The values that we are urged to export, moreover, are coterminous with how democracy evolved in 20th-century society, with special emphasis on the treatment of women, minorities, and on a certain acquisitive individualism identified with the opening of markets and a mixed economy.

Where the center Left and center Right differ is in how much energy they would expend on such a world democratic mission and whether they would pursue their idealistic goals unilaterally or with other powers. Historian John Ehrmann in *The Rise of the Neo-conservatives* makes the telling observation that during the Clinton administration, the architects of our present Republican foreign policy were generally upset by the lack of resolve in the president's handling of international relations. But these critics were pleased that Clinton and his foreign-policy

team raised democratic ideals in public forums. And they mostly did not dissent in 1999, when Clinton provided impeccably Wilsonian reasons for bombing Serb forces in Kosovo. That act was justified as an expression of our commitment to human rights and to the fashioning of a pluralistic society in Kosovo.

There is, of course, no justification for thinking, like Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, that all of mankind yearns for the current brand of American democracy. Nonetheless, those who hold this position have advantages over their critics. They belong to the boards of influential magazines and prestigious Beltway institutes. They are therefore more likely to get their views and biases accepted as policy than those who are kept out of the public discussion. Moreover, the manner in which American history is now presented in public education and the media glorifies powerful and expanded executive government. The presidents whom educators, popular historians, and journalists place in their pantheon have combined strong economic control with grand military crusades for globalist, egalitarian ideals.

While this precedent has certainly not helped to deflect criticism from Bush's crusade in Iraq for secularism and women's rights, as well as against terrorism, certain critical factors must be looked at to explain the president's lack of popularity, particularly on the Left. He is a Republican and therefore the representative of what is considered a right-wing party, teeming with Evangelicals and other undesirables whom proper

liberal intellectuals are supposed to despise. And the war is a big deal for the declared enemies of the Democrats, who condemn them on Fox and talk radio as the "unpatriotic Left."

But one should recognize these rhetorical outbursts for what they are: expressions of narrow partisanship. They do not prove that the only course that is consistent with Democratic thinking is shamefaced, blame-America retreat from international affairs. Nor does the center Left necessarily view wars intended to spread democracy as extrinsic to its own traditions. Vigorous presidents, who steamrolled everything in their way to launch crusades against reactionary forces at home and abroad, furnish the hagiography of the Democratic Party. In this respect—though no other—I find myself agreeing with Sen. Joe Lieberman and the editorial board of *The New Republic* when they remind us of their party's history. A party that still exalts Wilson, FDR, Kennedy, and Truman as its great presidents is not destined to become a permanent gathering of noninterventionists. An Obama administration might be less interested in internationalist crusades than Bush has been but only because it would be more concerned with feminist or minority programs and income redistribution. That is different from saying that Democrats do not embrace a religion of global democracy. Democrats express the same impulse as their Republican opposition toward making others more like us, as a look at the speeches of Bill Clinton and Madeleine Albright during

and after their adventure in Kosovo strongly suggests.

Those who favor liberal internationalist policies have cobbled together arguments or assertions that have flourished in public discourse. Although mostly based on hyperbole and flawed historical parallels, these opinions have gained considerable ground through being featured in widely circulated journals, the national press, and among the political class generally.

First, they hold that it is immoral or inconsistent to claim that democracy is good for one's own people without trying to bestow it on everyone else. Here one finds embedded certain long familiar themes that still resonate, especially Christian universalism, the Kantian categorical imperative, and disembodied phrases taken from the Declaration of Independence about natural and presumably globally extendible rights. Although these themes usually do not amount to a cohesive argument, they do constitute a rhetorically effective explanation for why others should pay us the flattery of imitation.

But what can we do if others do not relish our goodies, despite the fact that, according to Bush and the *Weekly Standard*, every man in the world—provided he knows what is good for him—hungers for our brand of freedom? Alas, there is no convincing evidence that everyone in the world wants our democracy, even if we can reasonably assume that Pakistani women have no desire to be put to death as fornicators after being raped. Pointing out that some people find certain local practices repugnant is different from demonstrating that traditional societies are eager to follow us politically and culturally. Asserting that most people would like to avoid suffering is not the same as demonstrating that they would like to incorporate the features of our late modern society, starting with secularism, an atomistic

society, children liberated from parental control, a right to abortions, and the open exhibition of gay lifestyles.

As for the naturalness of what we desire for others, one is reminded of David Hume's challenge to John Locke's assertions that civil societies arose out of a state of nature in order to protect a universally demanded list of natural rights. In *Of the Original Contract*, Hume noted that the form of consensual government that Locke saw as natural to the human condition had nothing to do with "the common sentiment of mankind" or the "practice and opinion of all nations and all ages." Wrote Hume, "What authority any moral reasoning can have, which leads into opinions so wide of the general practice of mankind, in every place but this single kingdom, it is easy to determine." Although Hume believed that "in the speculative sciences" an "appeal to general opinion" might be "deemed unfair and inconclusive," in examining moral and cultural values there is "no other standard by which any controversy can be decided." What Locke considered a universal right, "that citizens must consent to being taxed," is certainly an honorable position for an English Whig, but does not seem to be something that most people would view as a foundation of civil government.

What Hume points to as an overgeneralization should apply to liberal internationalists as well: they should be able to cite more illustrations of what they think is natural. Equally important, the view that it was necessary, or so the neoconservatives argue, to bomb the Germans and Japanese back into the Stone Age to give them what Allan Bloom approvingly calls "an educational experience" makes one wonder why mass destruction should be required to teach people what they should want.

The second set of arguments activated by liberal internationalists centers

on the proposition that unless we work to save souls for democracy, we'll have a world perpetually at war. Only democracies, according to every neoconservative scribbler on this planet, can be peaceful. Indeed, nondemocratic governments are compulsively mischievous and will, unless brought to see the light, unleash war on the bearers of democratic virtue. This argument has historical and conceptual defects, though it is proclaimed so often and so loudly by those in power that most intellectuals take its merit for granted. Typically its advocates construct a Manichean scheme running throughout human history, or at least as far back as the ancient Athenians, in which the democratic and antidemocratic sides are always pitted against each other. But until the very modern era, it is sometimes difficult to tell the democracies from the nondemocracies.

Consider slaveholding Athens under Cleisthenes, in which women were subject to total male control and less than 10 percent of the residents were enfranchised, as opposed to military-aristocratic Sparta, where, according to Aristotle, women held vast financial power and there was a wide electorate of "equals." It would not be amiss to point out that "liberal democracy," which our internationalists idolize, is a very recent product of a later modern civilization. The egalitarian attitudes extending even to gender relations, the role of public administration, the operation of secularizing tendencies, and the presence of large urban concentrations are all of decisive importance to understand this historical configuration. It is certainly not the most recent manifestation of the Athenian *polis* or of 18th-century British Whig politics.

Despite the need for such perspective, neoconservative classicists Donald Kagan and Victor Davis Hanson have spilled rivulets of ink explaining how the

struggle between Athens and Sparta, or “democratic” Thebes and proto-fascist Sparta, foreshadowed certain modern confrontations, for example, between the democratic Union under Lincoln’s benevolent leadership and the slavocratic Confederacy, or the global democrats Wilson and Churchill versus the demonic Kaiser Bill. Such anachronistic comparisons always seem to involve the same legerdemain, turning whatever side the writer hates into a precursor of the Nazis (whence the inescapable *argumentum ad Hitlerum*) and making the righteous victory appear counterfactually as a step towards the latest superduper version of U.S. democracy.

UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY, THERE WERE FEW GOVERNMENTS ANYWHERE ON EARTH THAT WOULD QUALIFY AS DEMOCRACIES IN THE CURRENT USAGE OF THAT TERM.

But things become dodgy when advocates of the world democratic peace offer conceptual proofs. The term “democracy” is applied to some societies but not others, depending on whom the author does or does not like. Societies that in the past bore some degree of family resemblance to each other socially and even politically—England, Austria, and Germany in 1914—have their typological differences overstated, while those societies that the author favors are declared to be approximations of present American democracy. Also conveniently disregarded in defining “liberal” and “democratic” is the thoroughly illiberal way in which “democratic” societies have acted in war. Is it really possible, for example, to show that Germany and Austria dealt with dissent during World War I more brutally than Wilson’s government once it decided to plunge into the European conflict? And was Churchill’s move in the summer of 1914 to impose a blockade on Germany—in violation of inter-

national law—before the guns of August had fired, any less a breach of good behavior than Germany’s appeal to necessity when it violated Belgian neutrality? Such a violation of Belgian sovereignty, by the way, had been part of Britain and France’s own war planning in the preceding decade.

A most incisive treatment of this double standard can be found in an article, “The Myth of the Democratic Peace” by Thomas Schwartz and Kiron K. Skinner, which appeared in *Orbis*. Particularly noteworthy is the authors’ dissection of Wilson’s declaration of war “against Prussian dictatorship,” an analysis that leads Schwartz and Skinner to

observe that Germany in 1914 was a state under law in which “chancellors who lost parliamentary votes of confidence typically quit.” Germany was among the first countries to practice universal male suffrage, while “Britain had a still potent House of Lords and a class-based system of advancement in the civil service and armed forces, and the southern United States had a disenfranchised and terrorized racial minority—actually a majority in Mississippi and South Carolina—and one-party rule.” This passage is certainly not intended to demonize the Anglo-American side in the war. It is an attempt, however, to suggest what the other side could have brought up about those qualities that rendered the “democracies” as illiberal as their enemies. Schwartz and Skinner are especially good at revealing the selective treatment of historical data by advocates of the proposition that “democracies never fight each other.”

Until quite recently, there were few, if any, governments anywhere on earth

that would qualify as democracies in the current usage of that term. By modern standards, all regimes were racist, sexist, elitist, and did not grant what are today expected welfare measures—with the exceptions of the German and Austrian governments, which did provide relatively generous workers’ benefits. Among this vast array of non-democracies that used to pollute our planet, some behaved peacefully and others did not. It may therefore not be the approval of culturally biased liberal internationalists but some other characteristic that defines which types of governments are desirous of peace and which are not.

And some of the features of modern democracy, particularly democratic messianism and popular nationalism, contribute to a stirring of the international pot. The notion that all countries must be brought—willingly or kicking and screaming—into the democratic fold is an invitation to belligerence. The notion that only democracies such as ours can be peaceful is what Edmund Burke called an “armed doctrine.” It is also one that, as Richard Gamble amply shows in *The War for Righteousness*, was associated by theological defenders of Woodrow Wilson and his “crusade for democracy” with expanded American political control and a divine mandate to reform the world. It is simply ridiculous to treat the pursuit of peace based on world democratic conversion as a peaceful enterprise. This is a barely disguised adaptation of the Communist goal of bringing about world harmony through worldwide socialist revolution.

Those who challenge the “democratic peace” are called morally callous. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom finds moral defects in those who dare to hold different views

Continued on page 34

Wrong About the Right

GEORGE PACKER'S *New Yorker* article declaring the "fall of conservatism" mistakes the failures of the Republican Party and institutional conservatism for a broader bankruptcy of conservative ideas. Describing the collapse of Republican political strength and the emptiness of the formulaic arguments of the GOP's loyal conservative followers, Packer outlines two responses to the conservative predicament: "purist" and "reformist." But he entirely neglects to note that most of those now advancing the "purist" view—in short, a return to first principles—spent the last seven years supporting most or all of the errors of the Bush administration. Those who held to first principles throughout receive no credit for their prescience, probably because their protestations against the war, expansion of government, and abuses of civil liberties show that there has been a coherent conservatism that did not tie itself to the GOP and consequently has not fallen into ruin.

When considering the conservative predicament, it is important to challenge the assumption that the substance of conservatism has been tried and found wanting. Crucial to "reformism"—largely right-wing meliorism aimed at serving Republican constituencies through the welfare state—is the idea that if the empty formalism and sloganeering of institutional conservatism have failed, then so have the ideas that the movement purports to promote. The main argument against a small-government, constitutionalist vision is that it is not electorally viable, not that it is undesirable or false in its arguments. Meanwhile, the drive to embrace ever more melioristic policies at home and abroad has twisted conservatism and led to policy failure in government.

The reformists demonstrate enormous facility with public policy and tend to be quite creative in trying to imagine how their conservatism, in appealing to working- and middle-class Americans, would prevent such people from drifting back into the Democratic camp. But their proposals resign Republicans and conservatives to creating new constituencies for expanded government. In the long term, this means empowering the party that most naturally profits from additional beneficiaries of government largesse, while giving up on a clear alternative that stresses reducing unsustainable entitlements and decentralizing power away from Washington.

Tellingly, Packer's article and the "reformists" he describes omit virtually all mention of foreign policy, yet it is in this sphere that the conservative acquiescence in an ambitious meliorist agenda was most pronounced and most disastrous. The fantasy of transforming the Near East by installing democracy in Baghdad is unthinkable without acceptance of the view that, in the words of David Brooks, "People want something melioristic, they want government to do things." Nothing could have demonstrated better than the Iraq War key conservative insights about the limits of effective government action, the importance of culture to the functioning of representative government, and suspicion of grand, idealistic programs. Nonetheless, most of those cited in the article remain committed to defending the war—and ensuring the lasting discredit of mainstream conservatism and the GOP.

The "purist" diagnosis is largely right, and the "reformist" agenda would reprise the same errors that most conservatives made during the Bush years: subordinating conservative priorities to Republican

electoral objectives, identifying the advance of conservative ideas with Republican electoral success, and engaging not in the reform of conservatism but in its continued transformation beyond all recognition. Reform implies going back to the original form, which is exactly the opposite of what Packer's so-called "reformists" propose to do.

If it is the central conservative insight that culture can change politics, as Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously said, the fundamental problem with the prescriptions of most "purists" and "reformists" is that they remain to different degrees focused on the political means to what seem to be increasingly political not cultural ends. While the close identification with the Republican Party has become a significant problem for the health and independence of conservatism over the last 20 years, conservatives have suffered from the more profound mistake of forgetting Moynihan's insight. They have been defining the success of their vision on the basis of electoral results, which have transitory importance and obscure meaning.

At some level, this is understandable, as a flood of rapid cultural change has eroded so many of the foundations that conservatives 50 or 60 years ago took for granted and assumed to be more or less enduring. However, this turn to politics reflects a kind of unhealthy dependence on political solutions that conservatives should know are not always forthcoming and can harm the very things they meant to shore up.

Conservatives could more profitably direct their attentions to producing the culture they want at home in the confidence that this would reshape the political landscape in ways that are far more enduring. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Sex and the City*]

Age Before Beauty

By Steve Sailer

ON THE LAST DAY OF MAY, my younger son was flipping through the movie section of the newspaper when he looked up with sad eyes. "All month, we had good movies—'Iron Man,' 'Speed Racer,' 'Prince Caspian,' 'Indiana Jones'—but then ... this," he intoned, unable to bring himself to utter the words "Sex and the City." "What happened?"

Indeed, across America, countless guys felt that the manly month of May, when the biggest explosion-laden blockbusters are unveiled at the multiplex, was being tainted by the long lines of ladies attending the film version of the 1998-2004 HBO sitcom. "Sex and the City" updates us on the coven of skanky spinsters who long ago moved to Manhattan to find "labels and love" (there apparently being no stores or men in Minnesota, or wherever).

Inside the theater, the palpable affection toward the characters was reminiscent of a 1980s "Star Trek" movie, whose fans couldn't wait to hear Scotty exclaim one more time, "She cannae take any more!" Granted, the movie version of "Sex and the City" isn't as witty as "Star Trek IV." It's also grindingly long at 148 minutes—the DVD ought to include a "Couples' Cut" with an hour edited out and a few dozen more jokes

tossed in. Still, it's certainly no worse than the "Matrix" sequels and "Star Wars" prequels that males turned out to see by the tens of millions.

The stars aren't getting any younger, so sit in the back row. Hollywood has generations of experience lighting actresses of a certain age, though, and the three supporting women look passable, even Cynthia Nixon (who plays the prickly red-headed Miranda), whom I pointed out to my wife in 1998 was an obvious lesbian. (It took Nixon until 2003 to figure it out for herself.)

In contrast, "Sex and the City's" leading lady, purported fashion icon Sarah Jessica Parker, who portrays columnist Carrie Bradshaw, looks like a bulimic bodybuilder. Evidently fearing matronly upper arms, the 43-year-old with zero percent body fat appears to have spent the last four years bench pressing and not eating, giving her the grotesquely defined arm musculature of Rambo after the Bataan Death March. Her horse chin and witch nose have become even more prominent, making me wonder whether, like Sylvester Stallone, who was recently arrested smuggling Human Growth Hormone into Australia, she's on some muscle-building medicine with head-enlarging side effects.

In the climactic scene in which bow-legged Carrie reunites with her true love, the financier Mr. Big (played by an embalmed-looking Chris Noth from "Law & Order"), Parker's cheesy fur coat and stick insect legs jutting out of her tiny skirt make her resemble a streetwalking crack addict. The sequence is a masterpiece of the *memento mori* genre, a terrifying depiction of the skull beneath the skin. Unfortunately, it's supposed to be a romantic comedy.

As hideous as Parker looks, the "Sex and the City" movie is actually less repugnant than the TV series. Each of the four women is monogamous throughout the year covered in the film. That's typical for rom-com movies these days, which are about living happily ever after. In contrast, the TV show just went on and on for six years, with the bodycounts (and, presumably, STD's) piling up.

The 1998 TV series was to Helen Fielding's 1996 novel *Bridget Jones's Diary* as Dick Wolf's 1990 TV show *Law & Order* was to Tom Wolfe's 1987 novel *Bonfire of the Vanities*. Wolf made a fortune by taking Wolfe's sardonic story of New York cops and prosecutors hunting for "the Great White Defendant" and stripping out all the satire. Similarly, the gay male writers behind *Sex and the City* started with Fielding's spoof of "urban families" of stylish single women who undermine each other's chances of landing a husband by constantly gathering over drinks to nitpick their boyfriends, and turned these mutually destructive circles into a fantasy about friendship.

It was never actually about female solidarity but about female competition for alpha males like Mr. Big. Nevertheless, women hate to be seen as competitive, so "Sex and the City" displayed the nice side of cliquishness, minus the nasty side: these social X-rays wouldn't be seen dead in the company of 99 percent of their fans.

The trick was to make women viewers feel less awful about the big mistakes they've made in their lives by making their bad decisions feel fashionable. Misery loves company. ■

Rated R for strong sexual content, graphic nudity, and language.

BOOKS

[*What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception*, Scott McClellan, Public Affairs, 368 pages]

Present at the Destruction

By Leon Hadar

IN ROBERT PENN WARREN'S *All the King's Men*, Jack Burden, a young and idealistic political reporter who goes to work as a right-hand man to Gov. Willie Stark of Louisiana, discovers that the populist figure he at first romanticized is a corrupt politician surrounded by unscrupulous aides and shady operators. But Stark continues to serve the charismatic Southern governor. He applies a professional and somewhat detached approach to his work until Stark's behavior has tragic consequences on the young aide and his loved ones. Burden, the narrator, concludes, "the story of Willie Stark and the story of Jack Burden are, in one sense, one story" and he accepts responsibility for his association with "the Boss."

Burden describes his tale as "the story of a man who lived the world and to him the world looked one way for a long time and then it looked another and a very different way." He "did not know when he had any responsibility... and when he did not." But finally he realizes that "he had seen too many people live and die" and that his preoccupation with the "Great Twitch"—a metaphor for the cynical political world—prevented him from searching for the truth.

There was a time when Scott McClellan, once a young and idealistic political communicator who went to work as a press secretary for George W. Bush, the popular governor of Texas who ended up occupying the White House, ideal-

ized his folksy boss. He saw him as a "man of personal charm, wit and enormous political skill," someone who "had a rare understanding of what everyday citizens across America were looking for in a leader, and was committed to giving it to them." McClellan certainly believed that Bush "possessed enough of those qualities to be a very good, if not great, president" and decided to move to Washington, D.C. to work for him at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

But McClellan discovered that his idol believed being president meant never having to say you're sorry. In addition to being insecure, President George W. Bush lacked curiosity and suffered from self-delusions. He was surrounded by a bunch of incompetent and nasty advisers like Dick Cheney (played a "sinister" role), Donald Rumsfeld ("controversial" and "disappointing"), Condoleezza Rice ("history will charge her harshly"), and Karl Rove (placed "political gain ahead of the national interest").

MCCLELLAN WRITES, THE "ONE REACTION BUSH WOULD NEVER ALLOW HIMSELF WAS SELF-DOUBT."

"The first grave mistake of Bush's presidency was rushing toward military confrontation with Iraq," McClellan writes. "It took his presidency off course and greatly damaged his standing with the public." Bush's second serious error was "his virtual blindness about his first mistake, and his own unwillingness to sustain a bipartisan spirit during a time of war and change course when events demanded it." Indeed, McClellan writes, the "one reaction Bush would never allow himself was self-doubt." He clung to the belief that the war upon which he had wagered his presidency would turn out right. As "the trickle of bad news turned into a torrent, the president could only double down."

Some of Bush's current and former aides who continue to share his bunker mentality have ridiculed McClellan's critique of the Iraq War. In particular, they resent his insistence that what drove

Bush toward military confrontation wasn't the threat of nonexistent weapons of mass destruction but "an ambitious and idealistic vision of transforming the Middle East through the spread of freedom." This dream was grounded in a "philosophy of coercive diplomacy, a belief that Iraq was ripe for conversion from a dictatorship into a beacon of liberty through the use of force, and a conviction that this could be achieved at nominal costs."

McClellan's critics contend that the former press aide is not a deep thinker (like, say, Douglas Feith) or a renowned Middle East expert (Paul Wolfowitz comes to mind). But in a way, it's McClellan's unique perspective that makes his memoir a fascinating read. For he comes across as a non-intellectual, unsophisticated, and unpretentious Texan who, like pre-9/11 Bush, favored a "humble" foreign policy and, like many Americans, was willing to give the White House the benefit of the doubt on Iraq.

Rove and Ari Fleischer, McClellan's predecessor as press secretary, suggest that the author of *What Happened* is not "the Scott that we knew." They express shock that a conservative Republican, a patriot, a man of faith, and a Bush loyalist—the kind of guy who should support the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the struggle against Islamofascism—should publish the sort of views about the Iraq War that one can read in, say, *The American Conservative*. McClellan's narrative makes it clear that from his very authentic, small-town American perspective, "waging an unnecessary war is a grave mistake." There is a clear compatibility between his own political-ideological roots, which were the reason he decided to work for Bush in the first place, and his devastating assessment that "the decision to invade Iraq was a serious strategic blunder"

whose evolution he had an opportunity to observe as a White House insider.

Indeed, outsiders, like those of us who opposed the Iraq War and the entire Freedom Agenda—based on our understanding of history and a deconstruction of the public statements and news reports on the invasion—will be struck by this testimony. McClellan confirms that Bush and his aides hoped that the war on terrorism, and by extension the war in Iraq, would serve to advance the Republican agenda and cement Bush's place in history. Officials in the administration, he writes, "deliberately chose to ignore the facts when assembling the case for war" and even worse, "they knowingly dissembled in order to make the case appear stronger than it was." They used deception to cover up their efforts to mislead the American people. The American media, in turn, was "too deferential to the White House and the administration" over the decision to go to war and failed in its duty to make the public more aware before the invasion "of the uncertainties, doubts, and caveats that underlay the intelligence" about Iraq.

So why didn't you resign from your job, Scotty? Despite the disillusion, McClellan, thanks to his own form of the "Great Twitch," was able to continue working for George W. Bush. He inserted himself into the "permanent campaign" of Washington—"a breeding ground for deception and a killing field for truth" dominated by the "philosophy of politics of war." Manipulating sources of public approval, politicizing the governing process, and tearing down opponents by employing distortion and misrepresentations are part of the job. And the job is a lot of fun. You get to work with the Leader of the Free World and other important people. You travel around the world on Air Force One and meet foreign leaders. You're an eyewitness to history. And you rationalize to yourself that perhaps you are "making a difference."

But at some point you discover that the costs outweigh the benefits. The story of George W. Bush and the story of

Scott McClellan are also, in one sense, one story. McClellan's epiphany happened in July 2005, when he discovered that what he had told the White House press corps two years earlier—that Rove, Cheney, and Scooter Libby, Cheney's chief of staff, were not involved in the leaking of classified information about Valerie Plame, the former CIA operative and wife of Joe Wilson—was untrue. McClellan was used by leading White House officials as part of a campaign to discredit Wilson, who had challenged the administration's reasons for going to war in Iraq.

It was the "defining moment in my time working for the president, and one of the most painful experiences of my life," McClellan writes. "I had unknowingly passed along false information. Five of the highest-ranking officials in the administration were involved in my doing so: Rove, Libby, Vice President Cheney, the president's chief of staff, Andrew Card, and the president himself." Upon learning this, he felt "constrained by my duties and loyalty to the president and unable to comment. But I promised reporters and the public that I would someday tell the whole story of what I knew."

In *All the King's Men*, the disillusioned young aide chose to admit responsibility for his association with his boss after seeing "many people live and die." McClellan considered telling the truth only after he became a victim of the administration's deception. In fact, he determined to expose the truth only after Bush and his aides decided that McClellan's role in their manipulation of the American media and public had damaged his credibility as a spokesman and fired him.

That McClellan is now able to get back at them and profit from doing so demonstrates that he has mastered the rules of the "permanent campaign." After all, he had great teachers. ■

Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign-policy studies and author, most recently, of Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East.

[*Rapture Ready!: Adventures in the Parallel Universe of Christian Pop Culture*, Daniel Radosh, Scribner, 320 pages]

On This Rock

By Peter Suderman

THE BACK FLAP of *Rapture Ready!: Adventures in the Parallel World of Christian Pop Culture* notes that author Daniel Radosh is a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*, a former writer at *Spy* magazine, and a resident of Brooklyn. Given this résumé, it's hardly surprising that, on the book's second page, he informs the reader that he is a New York liberal. Radosh spends much of his book's 300-odd pages reminding readers of this fact—snarking at opponents of gay marriage, expressing concern at the freedoms that might be lost in an anti-abortion regime, and worrying that a teenage rock fan's religious convictions might lay a "path to creationism and abstinence education." He even goes so far as to admit—without irony—to having "secular elitist" friends.

This makes the worldly and with-it Radosh quite the outsider as he dives into the decidedly un-hip universe of Evangelical pop culture—a world that is, above all, determined to be neither secular nor elite. That Radosh openly filters everything he sees through the lens of his own class means that his book is often as revealing about the mindset of the secular and urban elite as it is about Evangelical culture.

Nevertheless, *Rapture Ready* largely succeeds as a guide to the variegated world of spiritually inflected pop. Radosh goes in expecting uniformity, but quickly learns that there is no such thing as a singular Christian culture. The world he encounters is sprawling and self-contradictory, defined by no particular politics or ethos. Some of his subjects are simply in business; others are determined artists. Some view conversion as their primary goal; others downplay their commitment to proselytizing.

The breadth and variety of Christian pop culture, as well as its purveyors and consumers, is reflected in the individuals Radosh meets and interviews throughout the book. We encounter—to name only a few—a glow-stick wielding Mennonite DJ who throws raves in churches; an environmentally obsessed freegan indie rocker who eats exclusively from dumpsters and schedules his days around grocery-store disposal patterns; a pair of creation-science ideologues; a spiritual horror novelist; and a man who runs a Christian wrestling association. Radosh exhibits genuine interest in the particulars of their lives and pursuits, delving into the details of, say, the wrestler's feelings about violence and the novelist's frustration with the sensitivities of his Christian audience. Radosh may not succeed in combating the idea that pop-obsessed Evangelicals are a strange bunch, but he humanizes them all the same.

He paints complex portraits of modern, spiritually engaged Americans struggling to define their faith and its role in the world at large and is at his best in these encounters, proving himself a keen observer. He is skilled at teasing out the truths and contradictions of his subjects, many of whom he describes with lyrical precision. Take, for example, Radosh's description of Ken Hamm, a leading creationist who runs the group Answers in Genesis:

Ham is a somber, imposing figure. Born and raised in Australia, he speaks in a clipped, heavily-accented baritone that conveys a combination of boundless suspicion and macho authority. His hooded eyes and lycanthropic chin-curtain beard complete his aura of Old Testament prophet.

The book is replete with similarly vibrant, impressive passages. More often than not, his prose is equally felicitous when engaging with ideas. "If science is the search for answers, creationism is the elimination of questions," is his succinct summation of creation sci-

ence's anti-intellectualism. Upon witnessing yet another altar call—the invitation for nonbelievers to come forward and become Christians—cap off a Christian event, Radosh writes that "the fetishization of the altar call as a single moment of victory seems to obscure the need for the hard work that it must take to bring somebody to a genuinely meaningful faith."

Still, there are times when he allows his cultural proclivities to get the best of him. At an abstinence conference, he notes that the hotel has been made to look like a fantasy Victorian town, complete with a miniature indoor river and lovingly recreated shops and houses. He

civility. Faced with a procession of Bible-thumping wrestlers, heavy metal acts, and armor-of-God-clad superheroes, the easy route would be ridicule. Certainly, the Christian marketplace is overrun with deserving products. Radosh visits a conference for Christian vendors and catalogues the "Jesus junk" on offer. There are Gospel Golf Balls, Bible-believing action figures (invented by the man who gave the world G.I. Joe), fake tattoos, kazoos, and, somewhat famously, scripture-bearing breath fresheners called Testamints. Far from the sacred and the profane, we are in the land of the sacred and the silly.

RADOSH CATALOGUES THE "JESUS JUNK" ON OFFER. THERE ARE GOSPEL GOLF BALLS, **BIBLE-BELIEVING SUPERHERO ACTION FIGURES**, FAKE TATTOOS, KAZOOS, AND **SCRIPTURE-BEARING BREATH FRESHENERS** CALLED TESTAMINTS.

writes, "It was a perfect little world that did not, in any meaningful way, exist"—a too clever literary touch that Radosh was unable to resist. At the same conference, he picks up a "clean sex quote and joke book" and on finding a handful of jokes on women's liberation adds, "I checked the copyright date. It said 2004." He seems to be shocked that, even in modern America, some men still joke—cleanly—about feminism.

Similarly, the personal style of reporting in the book leads to occasional unevenness. At one point, he finds himself engaged in a heated, serious dispute with an anti-IVF activist. (Radosh's children were conceived through IVF.) At another, he conducts an absurd mock-interview with aging Christian skater Stephen Baldwin, of the famous Baldwin brothers, using passages clipped entirely from Baldwin's book. Does Radosh intend to be observer, participant, or researcher? It's never quite clear. The book has great range, but does not always maintain a consistent tone.

What he lacks in focus, however, Radosh makes up for in curiosity and

Applying a veneer of religiosity to such products is absurd. Their creators insist, however, that their keychains and assorted knick-knacks are heaven-sent tools for spiritual growth. Understandably, Radosh cannot help but crack wise when encountering these oddities and their sellers. (Seeing two sets of Bible-passage birthday cards, he quips, "Sometimes God gives two people the same idea, just to watch them fight it out.")

Stephen Baldwin aside, he resists easy mocking and cruelty and is willing to engage some of the most preposterous characters—Bibleman, anyone?—in challenging and thoughtful dialogue. Sometimes he judges their ideas, but rarely, if ever, does he judge the people behind them. True, his quips occasionally betray a hint of a sneer, but he clearly works to tamp down this tendency. The Evangelical world may be unfamiliar, but Radosh seems determined to treat it with respect.

This is not to say that the book is free of bias. On the contrary, it is explicitly presented as a product of the author's individual cultural and political milieu;

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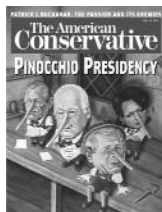
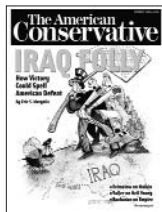
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he calls his work "personal and idiosyncratic rather than comprehensive." On the blog he has set up for the book, he explains that he writes from "an outsider's perspective."

That Radosh regards this alternative cultural landscape as largely foreign is to be expected. What is more telling is how he seems to view it as invisible—he describes it as having been "completely off [his] radar"—and, at least at the start, as somewhat insignificant, except as a "covert delivery mechanism for conservative ideology." Evangelical Christians, he assumes, are disconnected from reality and obsessed with politics. Their beliefs on everything from evolution to sexual purity lack credibility. They are unwilling and possibly unable to engage with the obvious truths of modernity.

It is undeniably true that many of this country's Christians are out of touch with the educated urban liberalism that Radosh represents—what many consider the American "mainstream." Yet Radosh's reporting shows that the universe of Christian pop culture—its books and music, its gimmicks and gifts, even its popular science—is often as pervasive and popular as anything in the larger secular world. Christian books regularly top bestseller lists when they are counted; Christian rock increasingly winds up on pop charts; polls consistently show that various forms of creationism are believed by a majority of the public.

The question then arises: Who is really out of touch? If anything, the Evangelicals Radosh meets seem interested in reaching out beyond their own familiar worlds, and the diversity of political opinion among believers puts lie to the myth of Evangelicals as a monolithic conservative political block. It is undoubtedly true that Christians seem excessively concerned about the threat of secular culture. But how many secular books and magazine articles in recent years have warned of impending theocracy, the Christian menace to secular society? When it comes to insularity and suspicion, the Christian world and its resolutely secular counterpart seem to have quite a bit in common.

Indeed, it's worth noting that Radosh approaches his project much as the Christians he meets approach theirs: through the lens of his personal and cultural identity. Being Jewish, he is naturally sensitive about anti-Semitic slights, and, being liberal, he is resistant to religious notions about abortion, homosexuality, and evolution. He hopes his words will prove meaningful to Christians, yet it is clear he is writing primarily for his own culture and class.

It's not surprising, then, that he appears most comfortable around the Christians who most resemble him: liberal, urban, educated, and steeped in alternative culture—the Evangelical secular elite. In particular, he seems to take to Jay Bakker, the tattooed, punk-rock-loving son of the famously disgraced Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker. These days, Jay runs a church that operates out of a bar in Brooklyn. He smokes and curses, expresses regret at the power of the Christian Right, and preaches acceptance of homosexuals. He is one of the book's most sympathetic characters.

Not only does Radosh latch on to modernist Christians like Bakker, he finishes the book by calling on his secular counterparts to be more open to them and their ideas, believing that, if allowed greater prominence in secular culture, they would prove a "moderating force" in Evangelicalism. Aware that this notion may seem counterintuitive, he frames his alliance with what he calls "Christian moderates" as an act of good will, tolerance, and inclusiveness. And in some ways that's right; certainly, he refrains from obvious attacks and imparts dignity to his subjects.

Yet for all the respect he shows, his evenhandedness only goes so far, and it undoubtedly carries an undertone of self-interest. It's hard not to see his final call as a strategy to persuade Christians to become more liberal, more urban, or to put it bluntly, more like him. Secular elite or not, Radosh has issued a brief for conversion—an altar call of his own. ■

Peter Suderman is editor of Doublethink Online.

[Thinking Politically: Essays in Political Theory, Michael Walzer, Yale University Press, 333 pages]

Against Abstraction

By Gerald J. Russello

DEEP INTO THIS wide-ranging collection, Michael Walzer, long an editor of *Dissent* and one of the leading philosophers of the Left, addresses the question of dirty hands in political action. His essay, first presented as a lecture in 1971, is eerily evocative of current debates over civil liberties and legitimate government interference.

Walzer considers what should be done to a government official who takes some immoral action—torture, say—for reasons of state. After acknowledging that as a rule politicians are “a good deal worse, morally worse, than the rest of us,” and that political power always implies the threat of violence, Walzer finds the dirty-hands question presents a paradox. Conventional wisdom holds that no one “succeeds in politics without getting his hands dirty. ... For sometimes it is right to try to succeed, and then it must also be right to get one’s hands dirty. But one’s hands get dirty from doing what it is wrong to do. And how can it be wrong to do what is right?”

Machiavelli and Max Weber, in their different ways, each responded to this core problem, but their solutions prove unsatisfactory to Walzer. They both rejected a common moral code for political life: Machiavelli because he believed good men can learn how not to be good (and be rewarded for it), Weber because he placed moral judgment in the hands of the ruler rather than those of the community. Walzer draws instead on Albert Camus. He concludes that sometimes unjust acts can be committed for the public good. We should not, however, condone those acts, nor reward their perpetrators, even when we accept them as necessary. We might, Walzer

notes, “see to it that fewer lies were told if we contrived to deny power and glory to the greatest liars,” even if the punishment of political bad actors can only be left to the “priest or confessional.”

“Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands” gives some sense of why current ideological labels have become meaningless at best or at worst tools of ideologues. In our present-day debates over proper political action, the subtlety and range of the Western intellectual tradition disappear. Instead, we get on the one hand the jingoism of the movement Right and neoconservative ideology, for whom the national-security state and the war against terror justify any enormity. On the other, we have the America-hating provinces of the Far Left, for whom any national action is by definition illegitimate. Both sides hurl moral absolutes without a sense of the realities of political life or the contradiction of a democracy that elects leaders whom the voters know will commit acts that, in other circumstances, would be condemned as unjust. Walzer steers clear of both extremes, without conceding that there are any easy answers.

Thinking Politically, edited by David Miller, a political philosopher at Oxford, will not repackage Walzer as a conservative—the respectful references to Marx would detract from the force of such an argument—but it may bring to light some previously unnoticed similarities between Walzer and conservatism. Although not trained as a political scientist, Walzer has for much of his career focused on the central questions of modern political theory, in a host of books on subjects ranging from just-war theory to social criticism and political philosophy. He is perhaps best known for his affiliation with the so-called communitarians during the 1990s. This ill-fated alliance, from which Walzer has distanced himself, was once thought of as the “third way” of American politics, harmonizing individualism and community. But it failed largely because of its own internal contradictions. Liberal communitarians never seemed to understand that communities did not have to

be liberal, and as for conservative communitarians—well, there really weren’t any. The conversation was conducted almost entirely within the range of acceptable opinion running from moderately liberal to leftist. The communitarian debate, such as it was, served the same purpose as the promotion of neo-conservatives as the only face of the legitimate Right, narrowing the political debate to a variety of views, all compatible with liberalism.

Walzer’s own intellectual profile puts him on the social-democratic side of the spectrum. He is somewhat suspicious of an abstract individualism. But he is no follower of John Rawls or his epigones such as the legal theorist Ronald Dworkin. In an essay included here, “A Critique of Philosophical Conversation,” Walzer pinpoints the problem with the overrated Rawls. In his long, tedious *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls expresses his idea of the “veil of ignorance,” behind which we would all become social democrats. This philosophical structure is revealed by Walzer for what it is: “[w]hat we hear from behind the veil of ignorance is really a philosophical soliloquy. The argument does not depend on any exchange of views; if we in turn step behind the veil we will simply agree.” Of course, we cannot step behind the veil. Each of us is bound up in his or her own culture, history, and family background. Those are the things that make us human, and must be addressed if we are to develop a working political system. To his credit, Walzer recognizes this flaw in the theories of his fellow liberals.

Walzer’s 1983 book, *Spheres of Justice*, was therefore something of a watershed in liberal theory. Liberalism, at least of a certain kind, had up until then argued for separation between public and private based on the need to protect individual rights. A citizen has certain rights, and the state, where power is concentrated, protects those rights. Walzer’s idea is different. His separation is a true pluralism in which, in Miller’s words, “a society [is] made up of different spheres, each of which preserves its autonomy and counterbalances the rest.” State

power is balanced against other kinds of power, and the centrality of rights fades—though it does not entirely disappear. But the interplay of different spheres allows also the interaction of different moral and cultural worlds, in a way that liberalism's stark dichotomy does not allow. In such a context, Walzer has advocated public subsidy for cultural institutions—religious welfare organizations, for example—to maintain a vibrant public life.

The structure Walzer advocates, Miller notes, is more realistic than either of its competing liberal alternatives: the empire of rights envisioned by Dworkin, or the anodyne multicultural paradise advocated by some on the Left. Instead, we are faced with real communities, which may have little patience for the schemes of those whom Russell Kirk called "coffee house philosophers." In a 1981 essay for *Political Theory*, "Philosophy and Democracy," Walzer confronts the temptation of political theorists to appoint wise men to lead an appreciative people into the promised land. A philosopher, he argues, must engage with the people, not separate from them pointing

to some universalist standard. From the citizen's standpoint, "It will not always be obvious that the rights, say, of abstract men and women, the inhabitants of some ideal commonwealth, ought to be enforced here and now." To do so would require trampling upon the rights and traditions that made the political community what it is. The philosopher retreats from his community to discern some universal blueprint for the commonwealth. His decision removes him from the political process, though his conclusions may be offered for consideration. What Walzer calls "philosophical restraint" is "simply the respect that outsiders owe to the decisions that citizens make among themselves and for themselves." Read "Supreme Court Justice" for "philosopher," and we have a liberal critique of judicial activism and a call for judicial restraint. This is hardly the rigorous constitutional originalism of Justice Antonin Scalia. Nevertheless, there is much in Walzer's account to please conservatives, even if Walzer departs substantively from conservatives on some issues.

For Walzer, then, "thinking politically" is thinking within an existing political community, which is an advance over much liberal thought. Yet he remains, in the end, a committed liberal. His essay on the communitarian critique of liberalism is a firm defense of the liberal project, from John Locke forward. While supportive of community, his goal is the liberal "union of unions" despite his conclusion that liberalism is a "self-subverting doctrine" which tends to destroy the very communities people need to live together peacefully. The conservative alternative of a culture of common commitments among all members is only useful as an occasional corrective when liberalism goes too far astray. The tension between his respect for the community and his defense of a liberal project that undermines it is one area where conservatives will disagree with Walzer. His recognition of that tension, however, makes him a political theorist worth reading. ■

Gerald J. Russello is editor of *The University Bookman* (www.kirkcenter.org).

Gottfried

Continued from page 26

about American foreign policy. One of his least favorite political thinkers, George Kennan, is scolded as a "relativist" for having tried to remove ideological passions from international relations. According to Bloom, "And when we Americans speak seriously about politics, we mean that our principles of freedom and equality and the rights based on them are rational and everywhere applicable. World War II was really an educational experiment undertaken to force those who do not accept these principles to do so." Apparently it is necessary to dehumanize "anti-democracies," to insist on unconditional surrender, and to ravage civilian populations with firebombs and atomic weapons—an "educational experiment" that had to be brought to completion.

Surely we can find less vindictive and less pedagogical ways to deal with security problems or with the occasional need to remove a destructive tyranny. My model here would be the successful effort of British Tories in the early 19th century to rid the world of the slave trade, something they accomplished without trying to transmit British parliamentary monarchy to other parts of the globe.

There are times when force is necessary to deal with physical threats to one's country, but it can be carried out without setting ideologues loose on the land. Such meddlers are not particularly helpful in resolving conflict and are more likely to inject into difficult situations an element of moral fanaticism. Unfortunately, with their grip on both sides of the political divide so sure, it's unlikely these would-be educators will be brought under control in the foreseeable future. ■

Paul Gottfried is a professor of humanities at Elizabethtown College and the author of *The Strange Death of Marxism*.

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The Big Muddy

All night it rained in Jocotepec, my small town in Mexico. Rain isn't unusual, but this was different. It was heavy. It didn't stop. Come morning, my wife and I

looked out the window and saw inches of brown water sluicing down the sloping street from the mountain.

About 9 o'clock that morning, the speakers on the church tower began: "*Necesitamos personas, ropa, comida. Personas, ropa....*" We need people, clothes, food. Something had happened.

The towns of our region—Chapala, Ajijic, San Juan Cosala, Jocotepec—lie along the north shore of Lake Chapala, squeezed into a narrow strip between the mountains, or high hills anyway, and the lake. You can walk from the shore to the upslope in about five minutes. The hills, which have little vegetation, are dotted with roundish boulders stuck in raw earth. When enough rain washes away the soil, the rocks begin to roll. This had happened.

A moving mass of boulders—first small rocks, then those of basketball size, then some as large as Volkswagens—had ploughed through San Juan Cosala. A commonly quoted figure, entirely plausible, is that 200 houses were destroyed. Nobody was killed, but houses were crushed or filled to the ceilings with mud. It was a massive disaster in a small way. Call it Katrina's baby brother.

At about 11, Violeta and I went to the square to offer our services and to buy food to contribute. By that time, a food-distribution center in the church was accepting donations and sending them to the scene in the trucks of volunteers.

The clothing collection point was busy. The town gym had been turned into temporary housing. When you have eight-foot ceilings and six feet of mud, a gym looks pretty good. At a desk in the gym volunteers lined up, waiting to be assigned jobs.

The only road along the lake was blocked by police to avoid interference with rescue teams, whose trucks came and went. Late that afternoon, Vi and I managed to get to San Juan. Things were horrendous. Walls of mud and rock had rolled down the vertical streets and across the main road, leaving walls of debris. We saw a pickup truck squashed like an accordion.

Heavy equipment was arriving from wherever Jalisco, our state, keeps it on what the military would call tank transporters—huge flatbed trucks. We saw bulldozers, front-end loaders, big machines painted yellow. Their scoops made them look like scorpions. A few were already working to clear the rubble, and others were arriving. Heavy white dump trucks labeled "Department of Public Works" waited to be filled.

The response had been fast and vigorous and participation universal. Doctors had come from neighboring towns, though miraculously they were not much needed. A businessman in Chapala had donated a large truck full of five-gallon *garrafones* of bottled water.

The next day, the streets were lined with men with shovels, and the big cats

worked. We talked to a man whose house had been on a sloping street. It no longer was, or at any rate was no longer a house. He said he had heard an odd rattling outside, looked out, and saw a river of water and rocks like softballs racing downhill. A couple of bigger rocks came by. His family escaped through a downslope window and ran hard. No injuries. No house, either.

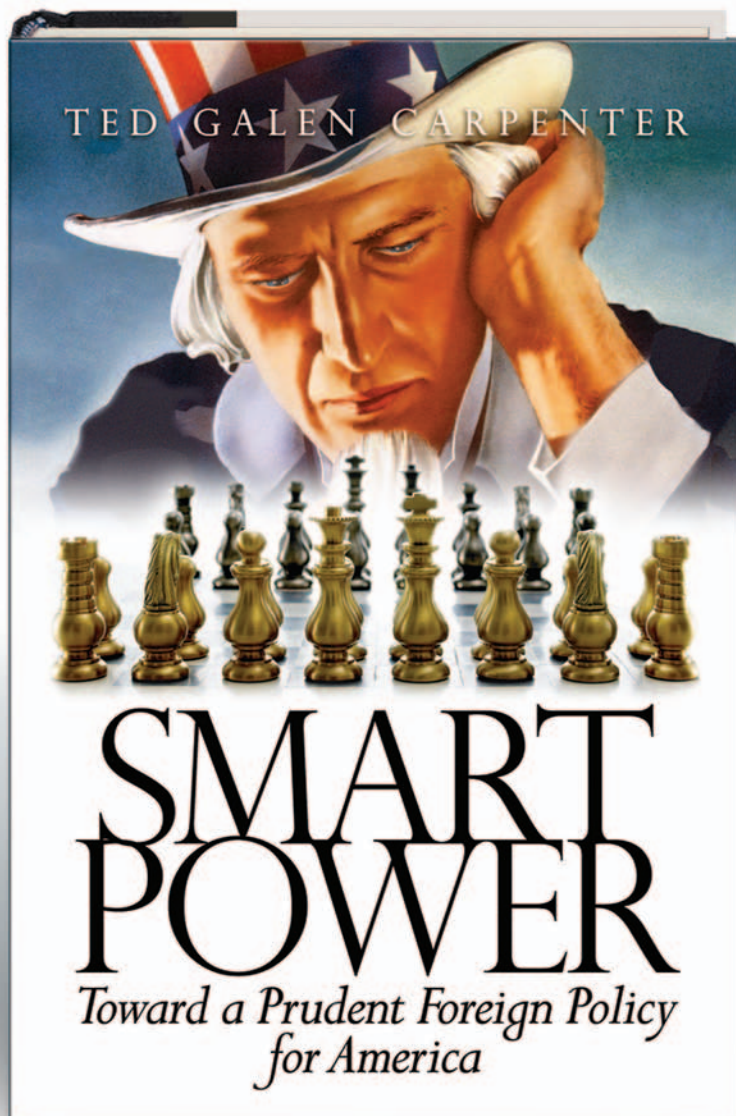
The upper part of San Juan is the Racquet Club, a posh gringo retirement community. Vi and I and Natalia, my stepdaughter, climbed through streets awash in boulders that hadn't been there before and found pricey houses wrecked. Not good, but not as bad as it could have been. Gringos have resources, and some of them probably had insurance. Mexicans in San Juan have neither. They had much to complain about, but didn't, being too busy trying to dig out.

A month or so later, San Juan seemed back to normal, though I'm not sure where those went whose homes were unsalvageable. Kids ran perilously close to the edge of the road as usual, and stores were open.

So far as I know, nothing of the disaster appeared in the U.S. media, apart from a reported one-sentence mention in a world wrap-up on Fox News. The town asked for no outside help and got none. There was no looting, no useless federal agencies to gum things up. The town was devastated so, with far fewer resources than the United States could bring to bear, they undevastated as best they could, which was pretty well, and went about their business.

That's how a small Mexican town handled its Katrina. ■

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